

ANGLO- SOVIET JOURNAL

Incorporating
THE ARTS IN THE USSR

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AND BOOK REVIEWS, ETC.

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Journal of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR

SCR Notes

WE opened March with a recital by entrants in the Chaikovsky Violin and Piano Competition. Mr. Wilfred Lehmann and Miss Beryl Kimber, who are both from Australia but have been living here, played a number of the pieces required of violinists in the competition, while Miss Thorun Tryggvason, who comes from Iceland but is studying at the Royal Academy, played piano pieces. The audience was small but appreciative, and wished them all success in Moscow.

In fact, Miss Kimber got through the final round in the violin section, and received a diploma of honour and a cash prize. The other finalists included eight Soviet violinists, one American, a Rumanian and a Bulgarian. First prize went to Valery Klimov of the USSR. Mr. Lehmann, though not getting into the third round, received a certificate of honour. Miss Tryggvason was not so successful and competed only in the first round of the piano competition, which was won by the young American pianist Van Cliburn.

Soviet Education

ON March 14 we held an SCR symposium on Soviet education at the Conway Hall. It took the form of an *Any Questions* forum, in which Professor J. Lauwerys (Professor of Comparative Education at the University of London Institute of Education), Mr. H. D. Hughes (Principal of Ruskin College) and Dr. K. Mendelssohn, F.R.S. (Reader in Physics at Oxford University) answered questions put by the audience. Mr. J. G. Crowther was question-master. The questions were as interesting as the answers and evoked some stimulating replies.

A lecture tour for Mr. Dmitry Taptikov, member of the VOKS Education Section and former headmaster of a Moscow secondary school, was planned for March, and would have taken him to Manchester, Leicester, Cambridge and Oxford. Unfortunately, Mr. Taptikov was taken seriously ill on the eve of his departure from Moscow and the whole tour had to be cancelled. We are very appreciative of the efforts of everyone who helped us to arrange lectures, hospitality and visits.

We had an interesting visitor at our offices on the eve of the Easter holiday, Mr. P. Ivanov, who is head of the education department of the Economic Council of Leningrad Region. Mr. Ivanov had been attending the Earls Court Electrical Exhibition. We had an informative chat with him about developments that are under consideration in the Soviet system

of technical education. The reorganisation of industrial management that was carried out in 1957, and led to the decentralisation of control of industry, is to be followed up in the field of vocational, technical and higher education. Trade schools and technical secondary schools (*tekhnikums*) have passed to the control of the local Economic Councils and will be integrated with the industrial life of the regions. Something similar is being considered for higher technological education, and it is expected that with the exception of the universities and some institutes the technical higher schools, like the secondary technical schools, will pass from control of the Ministry of Higher Education to that of the Economic Councils. The Ministry itself will probably be abolished and replaced by a State Committee for Higher Education.

We wished it had been possible to put Mr. Ivanov in touch with technical school teachers before he left London, but shortage of time, the Easter holiday and Easter conferences made it difficult.

Personal Contacts

WE had two opportunities during February and March to foster personal contacts. Members attending our February At Home had the opportunity to meet a number of Soviet students doing post-graduate or further studies in Great Britain, and in March our Music Section was able to give a small, informal reception in honour of Mr. Igor Bezrodny, the violinist, Mr. Genady Rozhdestvensky, the conductor from the Bolshoi Theatre, who had two successful concerts at the Festival Hall, and Mr. Lazar Berman, the pianist. Mr. Berman delighted us with two Scriabin études and de Falla's Ritual Fire Dance from *El Amor Brujo*.

Further contact receptions and garden parties will be held during the summer to entertain parties of Soviet tourists visiting London. We hope to make them a regular feature of our activity in the autumn, so that unheralded visitors can also be our guests.

Film Shows

WE had much pleasure in being able to show members two recent Soviet films at private views. The first, in March, was *The House Where I Live*, which charmed everyone with the homely touches of its story of two families in a big block of flats before and during the war. The second film, *In the Power of Gold*, was set in the Urals at the end of the last century and based on themes from the works of D. Mamin-Sibiryak.

Soviet Interest in Our Culture

THROUGHOUT the first weeks of April we had an exhibition on show at 14 Kensington Square that brought out the growing volume of cultural exchanges over the past few years, and the wide interest that exists in the USSR in British music, theatre, science and art, and in English literature and the English language itself. The exhibition was prepared by our friends in VOKS, and gave a graphic view of the work that societies like our own and other organisations have been doing to foster cultural relations.

Two events in Moscow in March and April marked a new development in this work. In March a conference of representatives of Soviet societies for cultural relations decided to wind up our old friend VOKS (the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) and to found a new organisation, the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. The new body has not found a short form for its title as succinct as VOKS. We look forward to fruitful co-operation with it. Almost all organisations concerned with cultural contacts with foreign countries are affiliated to the new union.

Later, the founding conference of a society devoted to fostering relations with Great Britain was held in Moscow, with delegates in attendance from many parts of the country. The society adopted the title USSR-Britain Society. The conference elected a board of eighty members, which has elected a small presidium or executive committee. Mr. Alexei Surkov, the poet, who is general secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, was elected chairman. The executive includes Miss Olga Lepeshinskaya, the ballerina; Mr. N. A. Mikhailov, the Minister of Culture; Mr. Sergei Obraztsov, the puppet-master; Mr. Solodovnikov, director of the Moscow Art Theatre; Mr. Chulaki, director of the Bolshoi Theatre; and others who have visited Britain and shown a deep interest in our culture.

The conference adopted a message to organisations and individuals in Britain, the text of which follows:

"Dear friends, we, participants in the meeting, representatives of different public organisations, factories, mills, collective farms, workers of culture, science and the arts, are glad to inform you of the foundation in our country of a USSR-Britain Society.

"At the present time the struggle for peace acquires particular significance. Ordinary people all over the world, irrespective of their nationality or political views, religion or colour, want to live in tranquillity and without fear for their future.

"In order to attain this great aim one must exert the maximum strength and

energy, support every step directed towards easing international tension.

"We cannot fail to note with profound satisfaction the understanding with which public opinion in Britain has received the humane decision of the USSR Supreme Soviet to stop tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons.

"We greet all people of Britain who are taking part in the movement for the immediate ending of atomic tests, for an end to the race in the production of nuclear weapons.

"One of the most important conditions for lasting peace is the strengthening of friendship among peoples, the development of cultural co-operation, the exchange of scientific and art treasures, personal contacts and intercourse among peoples.

"Soviet people have never shut themselves in within the confines of national culture and have never taken the stand of national narrow-mindedness. They are convinced that the successful development of culture is inconceivable without the utilisation of the attainments of culture of all countries and peoples, without an exchange of scientific thought and research on an international scale.

"In recent years favourable conditions have been created for the development of cultural relations between the peoples of the Soviet Union and Britain. The exchange of delegations, companies, exhibitions, etc., is gaining wider scope. Relations of friendship are growing stronger between individual cities of the Soviet Union and Britain.

"Great responsibility for world peace and security rests with the peoples of our countries. We believe that a further improvement in Soviet-British relations is imperative for the preservation of world peace. Expressing the opinion of all present, we set ourselves the following aims through the USSR-Britain Society:

To develop and strengthen friendship, understanding and trust between the peoples of the USSR and Britain;

To propagate in the Soviet Union information about the life and work of the British people, their history and culture;

To help British public organisations and individuals in giving an objective portrayal of the life of the Soviet people;

To utilise all opportunities for the development of friendly and cultural relations with wide sections of the public in Britain.

"We express the hope that the public organisations, persons engaged in culture, science and the arts and all men and women of Britain who stand for friendship and co-operation between Britain and the Soviet Union will in every way develop and strengthen friendly relations with the newly founded USSR-Britain Society."

The Moscow Art Theatre

Bertha Malnick

The author of this article, a well-known historian of the Russian Theatre, visited the USSR last year with a group sponsored by the SCR. Her article, unfortunately, had to go to press before the London season of the Art Theatre opened at Sadler's Wells, and had perforce to be prophetic about its reception; but it will, we feel sure, add to the enjoyment of all who see the Moscow Art company.

THE Moscow Art Theatre broke with tradition to establish a new tradition. The wisecracks shake their heads and say *Well, well, that's the fate of all revolutionaries*. What they ignore is the immense contribution made to the art of the theatre in forging this new tradition. The work and influence of the Art Theatre has been so widespread and fruitful that the very weight of its achievement has sometimes turned its authority into a deadlock. That is less the fault of the theatre than of its misguided admirers.

It must be remembered that despite the continuing magic of the name Stanislavsky the Art Theatre was not the creation of a single man. Dissatisfaction with the mediocre repertoire permitted and encouraged by strict censorship of plays, exasperation at bureaucratic direction of the Imperial Theatres, which by the mid-nineteenth century had established a monopoly in the two capitals, had produced many critics before the amateur actor Alekseyev (Stanislavsky) and the professional playwright and critic Nemirovich-Danchenko came together in 1897 to draw up the project for a new theatre. By the eighteen-forties Russia's greatest nineteenth-century actor Mikhail Shchepkin was writing bitterly to Gogol:

The repertoire hasn't changed in the least; it's just the same disgusting rubbish and more disgusting rubbish. That's what I have to slake my dramatic thirst with in my old age.

Fifty years later the leading actor and producer of the Maly Theatre, A. P. Lensky, was writing in almost identical terms:

From the beginning of the season I have been playing empty parts and till the end of the season there are no other parts in prospect. This is the sort of misery, the sort of spiritual hunger of which you die morally as people are now dying physically of famine.

The playwright Ostrovsky clamoured for the establishment of a national theatre for the middle and lower classes instead of the frivolous and banal entertainment doled out by government monopoly. He wanted plays that would "humanise" the illiterate and newly literate peasants and workers flocking to towns which could offer them little entertainment other than drinking bouts and brawls.

Without the plays of Chekhov and Gorky to give both sides of the curtain something to bite on, it is doubtful whether the Art Theatre would have established itself so rapidly. Both Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko were dedicated to the idea of a theatre "available to all", and to attract the wider public they envisaged they needed the stimulus of new ideas as well as new methods of staging. Nemirovich-Danchenko, who first perceived and deeply admired the unusual lyric quality of Chekhov's realism, patiently urged the more extrovert Stanislavsky to search for the subtle modulations of feeling and expression that would enable the actor to communicate the "unspoken" mood of the plays as well as their spoken text. This search for a new style played a significant part in the experiment and analysis which slowly evolved into the famous Stanislavsky "system" of acting.

Of course both men were anxious to make the repertoire as rich and diverse as possible. Plays by challenging foreign dramatists like Ibsen and Hauptmann were given early production, as well as time-honoured classics, Sophocles, Shakespeare and Goldoni. After the death of Chekhov in 1904, and the emigration of Gorky in 1906 and the ban on most of his plays, the theatre ranged far and wide to fill a painful gap. On the one hand it turned to Russian classics, Griboyedov, Gogol and the notoriously difficult Pushkin, on the other to predominantly stylistic experiments with fashionable authors breaking new ground, Knut Hamsen, Maeterlinck and Leonid Andreyev. Essays in symbolism and theatrical abstraction merely convinced Stanislavsky that styles which subordinated the actor to the stage-designer and producer were not likely to advance his "system", and in the absence of suitable modern plays he began to turn once more to the Russian classics, Turgenev (Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness* had been given as early as 1902), Dostoevsky and Saltykov-Shchedrin, for the psychological meat with which to feed actors destined to hold the centre of the stage. Nevertheless it is important to remember that though an increasingly dominant tone of psychological realism evolved from a ferment of free experiment it was not propounded as a ready-made dogma.

In this psychological theatre, that is in the subtle portrayal of human character and human relationships, the Art Theatre has no rival. All the appurtenances of the stage are subordinated to that end, and the actor is trained for many years to achieve complete mastery in projecting character from within. To say that he lives the part is misleading. He acts the part, but with all his faculties, intelligence and emotion, flesh and blood disciplined to communicate his own experience of the play to the audience. When one watches the great actors of the Art Theatre one is not only overwhelmed by the range of thought and feeling they convey so fully, but also, on sober reflection, amazed by the control which shapes powerful personalities to the subtle balance of an apparently effortless ensemble. This is nowhere better demonstrated than in their productions of Chekhov, where the episodic characters contribute almost as much to the pattern as the chief protagonists, and are played by masters of the art of showing life in a nutshell. The interplay of the ensemble is as much a part of the Stanislavsky system as the perfecting of the individual actor; the one would be unthinkable without the other. Every actor is part of the whole; he may play a large part or a small one, but his contribution is viewed in relation to the whole, not as a virtuoso solo. Hence the importance of the producer, who works through and with the actors to achieve a total effect far greater than the sum of individual performances in it.

The tie between producer and actor in the Art Theatre is extraordinarily close. Many of the theatre's producers have been actors of the first rank—Stanislavsky himself, and in the second generation the late and much lamented Khmelyov, also Kedrov and Stanitsyn, whose productions of *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard* are being given in London. No doubt there are strains and stresses between actors and producers in the Art Theatre as elsewhere, but they are very rarely apparent in performance. Five years training in a theatre school, a long apprenticeship and prolonged rehearsals rub smooth many rough edges. Indeed one of the current criticisms of the Art Theatre is that graduates of its present Studio-school, which was opened in 1943, serve too long an apprenticeship before they are given worth-while parts on the stage. The answer to this is that productions like *Twelfth Night* (1955), which were cast from young graduates, are felt to be not up to the usual standard, while those which project one or two younger actors into a formidable array of practised masters often serve merely to emphasise the inexperience of the newcomers.

A magnificent exception to the rule has been provided by Andreyeva. an

unknown young actress from the provinces who gatecrashed the Art Theatre to play the lead in *Anna Karenina*, and has proved a match for the older generation ; but such exceptions are rare, and the problem of producing a third generation up to the standard of the first, with actors of the calibre of Stanislavsky, Kachalov, Moskvín, Leonidov, Knipper-Chekhova and Lilina, or the second, with Khmelyov, Kedrov, Batalov, Livanov, Yanshin, Gribov, Tarasova and Yelanskaya, is one which is exercising both the theatre and its critics. It is actors of the second generation who will presumably dominate the stage in London, for they are at the height of their powers, and if they sometimes play parts that appear to English eyes to be too young for their physique their mastery of technique usually rides triumphantly over such physical discrepancies.

The main problem of the Art Theatre, before the Revolution as well as after it, has been to find plays worthy of its meticulous and searching style of production. By 1917 their repertoire had come to rest mainly on the classics, and it took some years for the theatre to adjust itself to what was happening in the country at large. The need for new plays became more and more insistent, but it was not until 1926 that a play on a contemporary theme, Bulgakov's *Days of the Turbins*, achieved a resounding success. Since then the theatre has produced many plays by Soviet authors. A few—Ivanov's *Armoured Train*, Korneichuk's *Platon Krechet*, Trenyov's *Lyubov Yarovaya*, Pogodin's *Kremlin Chimes*—have firmly established themselves in the repertoire ; this season's production of Leonov's *Golden Carriage* has been much commended, and promises to do likewise ; Gorky's plays retain their popularity ; but the mainstay of the theatre's repertoire undoubtedly consists of old and new productions of the classics. These include several plays by Ostrovsky and two enormously popular dramatisations of Tolstoy's novels, *Resurrection* and *Anna Karenina* (both produced by Nemirovich-Danchenko, who died in 1943), as well as the *Fruits of Enlightenment*, Gogol's *Dead Souls*, and the promise of a dramatised version of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Foreign classics are as popular in Russian. Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* survives in Stanislavsky's 1908 production ; others which retain their charm are *The Marriage of Figaro* (1927), *The Pickwick Club* (1934), Wilde's *Ideal Husband* (1945) and Sheridan's *School for Scandal* (1940).

Although the theatre is constantly trying out new plays, the public flock most eagerly to see them in the old ones. The chief reason for this may be the dearth of good new dramatists, but the fact remains that the Art Theatre's style of acting is closely bound up with the psychological exposition of character which has dominated the drama and novel for the past hundred years. What was a striking revelation fifty or sixty years ago may, however, appear a truism today.

No one is likely to challenge the theatre's mastery of its chosen style. What is being said in Russia, and will certainly be said here, is that the theatre lends itself to different kinds of exposition, and that after many decades of psychological realism it may well wish to try its wings in freer flights of fancy and imagination. However good a theatre, its style should not be imposed on all and sundry, and those critics who proposed the Art Theatre as a model for the whole of the Soviet stage did it, as well as many other theatres with an original contribution to make, more harm than good. Similarly, slavish imitations of the "method", which if it propounds anything insists that acting must always be based on the author's material and the actor's honest experience, merely vulgarise and distort what is a guide and a discipline, not a ready-made solution of all possible problems. No one in his senses will expect a Delphic oracle. What both student and spectators will see in London is a company fired by the original inspiration of its co-founders, which has been maintained for the past twenty years by their disciples ; actors who have

turned their self-imposed limits into a discipline which demands the utmost subtlety, skill and integrity, who can strike at the heart with a single word or gesture and bring tears to the eyes of the most hardened cynic. Whatever their personal taste, if they share the human as well as the professional experience that the Art Theatre brings to the interpretation of Chekhov, Londoners will be abundantly and profoundly rewarded. This may not be the last word in the theatre, but it is likely to prove a lasting one.

The Ukrainian Cossacks

ACCORDING to some writers the survival of ballet depends not so much on its creative powers as on the surrounding hullabaloo which dings all kinds of alluring things about it into the heads of the potential audience.

Is such stimulus really vital for its success ?

Recently the Ukrainian Cossack Company evoked enormous enthusiasm without much publicity.

Dancing is one of the most æsthetically satisfying forms of theatrical art because, being organically related to music, it appeals simultaneously to two senses and reveals the grace and beauty of nature's most wonderful and greatest creation, man.

It goes without saying that it moves the public only when it is technically perfect, inspired and radiant with warmth and unrepressed feeling ; in short, it must be expressive.

The USSR has sent several excellent dance ensembles here, among which the Ukrainian has by some critics been regarded as outstanding. This is not quite so. Each had something outstanding in its repertoire.

Although the *gopak* by Moiseyev's ensemble was breathtaking, and appeared to have reached a limit of virtuosity, this dance was even more stupendous in the Ukrainian company. No wonder there was pandemonium in the theatre every night ! The amazing effect, which surpassed the previous unforgettable impression, has probably quite a simple explanation : the *gopak* is a Ukrainian dance. Moiseyev, however, presented a programme of wider range, comprising dances of various nations, among which the most remarkable, besides the *gopak*, were the Russian, the Moldavian and *The Partisans*.

The Beriozka company's dance of the same name was also a revelation which conquered the hearts of the audience. Its *Northern* and *Swan* dances were no less enchanting.

Other Soviet companies have also shown original creations.

Besides major compositions, every ensemble has produced little sketches pulsating with life, humour and various emotions expressed in dances of action and mime. How boring are abstract ballets compared with these choreographic miniatures ! When we praise dancing we often speak of its poetry of movement, its lyrical, romantic or dramatic qualities. And who has ever read beautiful poetry devoid of any idea ?

A national or character dance, even when there is no story in it, always portrays some characteristic features of the people to whom it belongs ; in other words, it expresses an idea. In a classical dance also, when it is a work of art, form is inseparable from content.

The soloists of the Ukrainian company are superb actors. Their sincerity of dramatic expression is almost uncanny. Take, for example, the emotion of joy changing to despair in a young man courting a girl who uses most subtle feminine means of conquest. Or consider the irresistible comic gaiety of the four Chumaks from the far-distant Ukrainian past who have bought one pair of boots, and when each wears them in turn his dance varies in style according to whether they fit him or not. In general, Ukrainians are famous in Russia for their great sense of humour, a supreme example of which we find in Gogol.

A dance which represents the weaving of a carpet is exquisite in its feminine grace. Continuously changing patterns of coloured threads blend harmoniously with ingenious formations of dancing Cossack girls. As a contrast to this lyrical choreographic poem of the rural Ukraine, the virile games and dances of *Zaparozhysi* are a frenzied but disciplined military scene depicting seventeenth-century Dnieper Cossacks in bold, vivid strokes of scarlet, and showing a masterly composition.

For sheer virtuosity in some movements of the *gopak* the Ukrainian Cossacks are unsurpassed by the greatest ballet dancers. I am speaking, of course, only about those movements which belong to both ballet and *gopak*. It is immaterial where they originated, whether ballet influenced certain steps in the *gopak* or vice versa, or whether they developed independently of each other.

Let us consider a jump in which a Ukrainian Cossack joins his heels to the back of his head, forming a ring in the air. Compare this amazing *ballon* with the same movement performed by a dancer of the Bolshoi Theatre in the Tatar dances from the *Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. His heels do not touch his head. Some critics might retort "So what?" True, it is not necessary for a ballet dancer to have such exceptional, almost supernatural, flexibility of spine, but a strong, flexible back is necessary for all dancers. This ring-like *ballon* is not only breathtaking, it fits beautifully into the whirling pattern formed by the ensemble and is therefore æsthetically justified.

The pirouettes and *tours en l'air* of these Ukrainians are also unsurpassed. Their pirouettes are vertiginous in speed and seemingly never-ending: they are uncountable. *Tours en l'air* are performed in various poses, with straight, bent or outstretched legs.

Leaps with legs *écartés* at right angles to the body or lifted forward at the same angle, in both cases fingers touching toes, are typical *gopak* movements. They are a test of virtuosity.

The squatting step in the finale of the *gopak*, the so-called *vosdushnaya prissiadka* (aerial squatting step), was the most dazzling ever seen in this dance.

The effect produced by these Cossacks' *gopak* can only be described in French words, which in this connection lose their literal meaning and acquire a sense of an incredible phenomenon: *c'est fou!*

V.K.

CORRECTION

In the article "Paul Czinner's Film 'The Bolshoi Ballet'" in our last issue, for "Lakharov" (p. 17, l. 10) read Zakharov, and for "lion" (p. 18, l. 4) read Ioin. On p. 16, in l. 7, for "a baby" read Baby.

Thoughts on Jazz

N. Minkh

Since the World Youth Festival in Moscow last summer, there has been heated discussion in the Soviet Union about jazz ; and just as here, it seems to rouse the deepest passion and partisanship. In this article N. Minkh tries to approach the subject from a little above the combat, discusses the different styles of band that appeared in the Youth Festival and gives his views on the development of Soviet jazz and light music. We shall not be surprised, however, if he rouses some fan to fury.

LOVERS of popular music are always interested in the various trends which exist in this genre, and follow its development closely. This is quite understandable, as songs and different types of popular music, from jazz to folk orchestras, are an important part of the life of Soviet people, bringing variety to it, as do films, television, good books, and sports.

However, experience has shown that there are many problems in this field which naturally cannot be solved through administrative channels.

There are several outstanding Soviet State orchestras of popular music, which perform at concerts and on the radio, and make many recordings. There are many skilled and mature musicians, dedicated to their profession, in these orchestras. Many new popular songs are written especially for them.

What is the personal style of each of these orchestras ? What is the main difference between them and foreign jazz bands ? What should the repertoire and style of Soviet orchestras of popular music be ?

These questions always crop up when evaluating our popular music. However, the critics do not supply the necessary answers, and our orchestras are often forced to develop haphazard.

We know only too well that the contorted "art" of bourgeois "commercial" jazz, with its cult of mechanical rhythm and unhealthy hysteria, is alien to Soviet culture, but we do not always have a clear conception of what Soviet jazz should be like.

However, as Soviet orchestras of popular music are State orchestras, called upon to play a definite part in the development of Soviet music, they should be helped more readily with an encouraging word, good advice and strict but expert criticism.

We cannot develop our own style of popular music without a clear understanding of the pros and cons of popular jazz bands abroad, in the capitalist countries and in the People's Democracies, so as to decide what to reject and what may offer us a good example to follow.

In this respect the experience gained from the international contest of jazz bands in Moscow during the World Youth Festival last year is of great value.

Soviet musicians were eager to hear their foreign colleagues play at the festival. Nearly twenty orchestras performed. They represented the jazz of capitalist countries (Australia, Belgium, Great Britain, Iceland, Italy, France and Sweden) and the People's Democracies (Hungary, the GDR, Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia).

On comparing these orchestras one sees that popular music abroad, and jazz in particular, is by no means a stagnant unchanging form, but is a very complicated and controversial issue. In the field of jazz there is a sharp controversy between the purely formalistic tendencies of Americanised "commercial" jazz and the more healthy spontaneously evolved trends. The jazz bands which played at the festival showed a wide range of style and approach.

Small Dixieland bands played nothing but jazz classics of the twenties. Their

presentation (in the main these were blues and ragtime numbers) never wavered from the traditions and style of the time. One of the outstanding features of these bands is that the musicians seem to improvise as they pick up the theme stated in the opening and closing bars, creating their own variations as they go along.

Actually these are rehearsed solos based on definite rehearsed melodies, which, though they do not appear in the score (so that they may be called "improvisation"), have been well memorised.

As concerns the playing itself, these thirty-two-bar solos are presented in a highly skilled but deliberately rough manner, with a complete lack of subtlety. The time-honoured traditions of Dixieland exclude any bright tonal or harmonic development, which of course makes it seem crude. In addition, the musicians move nonchalantly about the stage, extremely relaxed and somewhat mannered.

However, this style still retains some elements of Negro folk music. Thanks to the skill of the players, the sharply defined rhythms and the assumed moodiness, concerts given by such bands (especially the Italian *New Orleans* jazz band) were extremely popular at the festival.

The "modern" jazz bands play in a completely different style. Their music lacks any clear melody and is based on refined harmony, unusual tonal combinations and skilled polyphonic patterns. This is in fact a very cold, unemotional and abstract type of music. The Polish *Komeda Sextet* was a typical representative of this style of jazz.

The French national concert featured Michel Legrand's orchestra, a large professional concert ensemble made up of a mixed vocal group, two drummers, a double-bass, a large brass section and a number of saxophones. The usual guitar was missing, there were no violins at all (it turned out later that the orchestra had come without its string group), and the piano was used rarely and only for solos, when Michel Legrand, the young conductor and composer, would sit down to play it in the intervals of conducting. The orchestra was outstanding for the virtuosity of the musicians and the perfection of every detail of the score. It made good use of the vocal group, which appeared as a "member" in group polyphony, or became a many-voiced harmonic pattern against which the melody of the solo instrument was developed, or at times performed by itself, in a way substituting for the strings. The skill of the orchestra was also seen in the amazing harmony it achieved when all the players seemed to be breathing in unison.

However, there are several objections to the type of music played. The sharp harmonies combined with the high registers are deliberately intended to play on the listener's nerve reflexes. The sudden and frequent changes from soft tones to harsh create a feeling of extreme tension and have a disturbing effect. To a great extent this comes from imitating the "left" branch of American jazz, which mirrors the ugly features of contemporary bourgeois culture.

French musicians, members of the jury of the festival jazz contest, in conversation with Soviet colleagues, said that Michel Legrand's orchestra had aroused interest in France mainly as an experimental jazz orchestra, but that it had not very many ardent admirers.

Among the smaller orchestras which played at the festival I would like to mention those of V. Klos (Czechoslovakia) and G. Cosma (Rumania). They were both outstanding for the soft and lyrical qualities of their music. In spirit their repertoires are close to songs and are therefore readily understandable. It is important to note that the specific methods of jazz (the sharply defined rhythms, the principle of breaking the score into sections, and solo improvisations) were retained in full; the harmonic exaggerations, overdone mannerisms and crudity characteristic of "left" jazz bands were entirely absent.

A group of dance orchestras from the German Democratic Republic and Sweden were in a class by themselves. Though they had many fine points, their performances were marked by one great shortcoming: the sacrifice of melody to rhythm.

It is a pity the so-called sympho-jazz orchestras were not represented at the festival. Such orchestras usually have a large string group, and their repertoire consists of melodious catchy numbers. Soviet listeners have come to know these orchestras through the radio and foreign films. We consider that they represent a more progressive trend in jazz and are notable for their artistic sense, expressiveness and grace.

Despite the great differences in these types of jazz, they are united by a single feature, virtuosity in performance. As a rule, with very rare exceptions, foreign jazz bands are composed of highly skilled musicians. Even the amateur jazz bands at the festival were well above average.

The artistic trends followed by several orchestras arouse great doubts. Many foreign jazz bands, following the demands of fashion, strive to be super-original and thus lose touch with their own national musical traditions.

The following questions arise. *Why* should the Italians, for instance, revive the "traditional" jazz of the twenties? *Why* has Polish jazz drifted off into the abstract? (It should be noted that the repertoire of the Warsaw *Blue Jazz*, which toured the Soviet Union in 1956, was based entirely on American music.) Both inevitably appear puzzling, as both Italy and Poland have their own national traditions in the field of music and great treasures of folk music.

At times this imitation of American jazz becomes grotesque. Not only special techniques, but American popular music itself, which largely reflects the disintegration and degradation of bourgeois culture, has become an object of imitation. Artificial sound effects, sensationalism, an attempt to achieve superficial "originality" and at the same time an amazing standardisation, an often purposely exaggerated lack of melody—all are keyed to satisfy the least demanding listener. However, there are healthy democratic tendencies deriving from the folk-song tradition in American popular music. Thus the well-known works of Gershwin, Porter and Kern are all based on popular songs and are notable for their good taste and fresh rhythms.



It is difficult to predict how the extreme branch of jazz will develop and where this abstract experimentation will take it, but in the final analysis this is of no great interest to Soviet musicians. (Naturally, there is a small group of followers of the "left" branch of jazz among our youth, but only lack of musical taste can explain why these people go into a hypnotic trance at the mere mention of the words "American style".)

It is difficult to imagine the life of our young people without songs and dances, without the different types of popular music. We cannot disregard their requirements. Here Soviet musicians dealing with popular music face great new possibilities.

The avid followers of Americanised ultra-jazz who dream of transplanting a frankly bourgeois style of jazz on to Soviet soil are undoubtedly quite in the wrong. The ultra-modern tendency of which they are enamoured is not developing here and never will, for Soviet people do not accept it. Yet popular music, song or dance, written in an original, colourful manner, will always have a wide audience. In this respect we have wonderful traditions, which we sometimes forget.

In the early thirties, jazz bands and films brought us new songs—the colourful, mischievous melodies of Dunayevsky, the patriotic *Polyushko-polye* and *Kakhovka*, and many other wonderful tunes, which replaced "haunting" gipsy melodies and low-life tunes. The new songs performed by jazz orchestras

became extremely popular and ousted the trivial musical insipidities dating back to the NEP days.

The partnership of such musicians as I. Dunayevsky and L. Utyosov laid the foundation for a new and independent trend in Soviet jazz based on vital aspects of Soviet song-writing instead of on tricks and bogus originality. When the old favourites played by L. Utyosov and his first-class orchestra resounded from the stage of the State Variety Theatre in Moscow during the celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution, the excitement of the grateful audience, deeply touched by their favourite songs, so closely tied with the lives of the people, was thus quite understandable.

Let us recall how much joy the modest little popular bands brought the soldiers and sailors during the war, when they visited them in dug-outs and crowded wardrooms on board ship ; how many excellently arranged songs and pieces by V. Knushevitsky were performed by the orchestra of the USSR Radio. Are not these assets of Soviet popular music ?

Nevertheless, this is pitifully little. Seldom indeed in the past few years have our composers surprised us with a good lyrical song or a good piece of dance music. Mass appeal, however, means a great quantity of very varied and appealing compositions. The problems facing popular music today can be solved only by the creation of a large and excellent repertoire.

There are many good orchestras in the country. The Azerbaijan State Orchestra of Popular Music, conducted by R. Beibutov, recently presented its new repertoire. This orchestra has included many elements of Azerbaijan folk melodies and rhythms in its programme, which is a very natural and fruitful decision.

O. Lundstrem's orchestra has found itself in a difficult situation as concerns its repertoire. Though the orchestra is excellent, O. Lundstrem, a fine and resourceful musician, is now struggling with great artistic problems. He must be helped.

Many bands located far from large cities have no new scores, and are thus forced to play all kinds of trash. This paucity of repertoire must be overcome ; good, original popular music should be written for the variety orchestras. This is up to the composers, the Ministry of Culture and the various concert organisations.

Many papers, including the central ones, have no firm opinion as regards popular music. That is why their reviews, usually published with the intention of "devouring" someone, are a mass of unfortunate confusion. Many musicians have read two diametrically opposed articles on the TSDRI orchestra by M. Ignatieva in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura* ; these articles were justly satirised in *Krokodil* (1957, 27). Unfortunately this is not the only time musicians working in the difficult field of popular music have met with open hostility.

It would be absurd to think that as regards popular music, especially in the field of jazz, our musicians never make mistakes. We who work in this genre are greatly in need of sound advice and genuinely constructive criticism. But this criticism must be professional, convincing and systematic ; it must help to improve Soviet popular music.

If musicians, music critics and music lovers can help us to rid popular music of banality and ugliness it will become a very useful means of furthering the cultural education of the masses.

From *Sovetskaya Muzyka*, 1958, 2.

Notes on Mayakovsky

Sergei M. Eisenstein

Hitherto unpublished

A STRANGE provincial town. How many towns in the western territory are built of red brick. Sooty and depressing. But this town's particularly strange. Here the main streets have white paint over the red bricks. And all over the white background scamper green circles. Orange squares. Blue rectangles.

This is Vitebsk in 1920. Kazimir Malevich's* brush has passed all over its brick walls.

"Squares are our palettes", echoes from the walls.

But our military column does not stop long in the town of Vitebsk. Loaded with kettles and teapots, we rumble on.

Before our eyes—the orange circles, red squares and green trapezoids of our passing impressions of the town . . .

Travelling, travelling, travelling . . .

Closer to the front. And suddenly here again are violet ovals, black rectangles, yellow squares!

The geometry seems the same.

But, as a matter of fact, no.

For attached to the bottom of the pink circle is a violet one growing out of two black rectangles.

A spirited flourish of the brush on top: a helmet plume.

An even more spirited one at the side: a sabre.

A third: a moustache.

Two lines of text.

And a Polish squire (*pan*) is transfixed to a ROSTA† poster.

Here runs the demarcation line where left meets "left".

The revolutionary left and the final grimaces of the aesthetically "left".

And here too is the unbridgeable gulf between them.

Suprematist‡ confetti, strewn about on the streets of a dumbfounded town.

And geometry, taken to a piercing pitch of purposeful expressiveness.

Up to the coloured propaganda lines, striking heart and thought. . . .

I saw Mayakovsky for the first time through a ROSTA window.



We're timidly entering the building of the RSFSR-1 Theatre. The harsh glare of spotlights. A conglomeration of plywood and benches. People getting frostbitten in the unheated theatre building. The final rehearsals of a play are in progress; a strange combination, embracing in its title both *bouffe* and *mystery*. Weird lines of text are heard. It's as though one stress per word were not enough. Evidently one blow isn't sufficient for them. They hack away, like people fighting in olden days: with both hands. With double blows.

* A celebrated abstract artist of the 1920s.

† ROSTA: Russian Telegraphic Agency—now TASS.

‡ Suprematism: an abstract school of painting of which the foremost exponent was Malevich.

They beat . . . and beat . . . and above the commotion and din of rehearsal blares :

“ . . . We are Australi-ans . . . ”

“ . . . We had every-thing ! . . . ”

At this point things come to an abrupt halt. Towards the producer* (from our corner only his shaven skull is visible, covered by a tall red Turkish fez) comes a furious giant with his coat thrown open. Between the collar and the cap an enormous square chin. Then a lip and a cigarette, and, transcending everything, a stream of violent abuse.

This is the author. This is Mayakovsky.

He's dissatisfied with something.

The start of a frightful tirade. But at this point someone seizes us by the collar. Someone's asking what right have we to be hiding here in the aisles of someone else's theatre. A few moments later we're strolling, no longer inside, but outside the theatre building.

Thus we saw Mayakovsky for the first time.

“ Ah, so this is what you're like. ” A huge sturdy fellow is speaking with his legs widely straddled. My hand is swallowed up in his enormous paw.

“ And do you know, I spent all yesterday evening being very charming to Professor F, thinking he was you ! ”

We're now by the Myasnitsky gates, in Vodopyan. In *Lef*†. And considerably later. I'm no longer slipping into other people's theatres without a ticket, but rehearsing in my own, the Proletkult. Confronting me is the editor of *Lef*, V. V. Mayakovsky, and I'm joining this newly formed fighting association : my own first play hasn't come out yet, but this particular infant is already so boisterous even in the very making, and so sharply delineated in the cradle, that it's been accepted for *Lef* without an “ examination ”. My first theoretical article is also being published in *Lef* No. 3 . . .

Sharply criticising the “ literary processing ” (such were the words they were coining in *Lef* at that time) of the text of Ostrovsky by one of the Lefists, V.V. will later on regret that he hasn't himself undertaken the text of this most biting and gay Proletkult propaganda parade. Be this as it may, it's this very Mayakovsky who first celebrates the production of *The Wise Man* and my first first-night with a bottle of champagne. There isn't any time for regrets over the rehash of a text. There's too much to do. With errors, of course. With mistakes, of course. Deviations and excesses. But with fervour and talent. *Lef* is fighting, with journal, reports and speeches, for the destruction of everything that's out of date. Up to the neck in work. And further memories of Mayakovsky merge into an endless string of speeches in the Politechnical Museum, in the hall of the Conservatoire. Violent speeches about . . . Isadora Duncan, with faded charm, disturbing decaying gourmands. Deliveries of poetics from the Pegasus's Stall or the Domino and similar little pubs which flourished under NEP.

To this day ineradicable from my memory :

A loud voice, a jaw, readings like hammer strokes, thoughts like hammer strokes. The radiance of October over everything.

Then the last gasp of *New Lef*, that feeble apology for an heir to the once lively and militant *Lef*. Faith in yesterday's *Lef* slogans have gone. No new

* This refers to V. E. Meyerhold, putting on *Mystery-Bouffe* in the RSFSR-1 Theatre.

† *Lef* : Left Front of Arts.

slogans to take their place. Stunts and gimmicks they won't admit to. And, at the centre, no longer the spirit of Mayakovsky, but the "editorial apparatus". Long disputes about *Lef* orthodoxy. I'm already on the list of "deserters". Already I've "transgressed": I dared to put Lenin on the screen in the film *October* (1927). It's a bad thing when they start putting purity of genre-writing before an urgent task.

Not joining *New Lef*, I turn my back on it. Our paths diverge. Incidentally, the same applies to Mayakovsky. Soon *New Lef* disintegrates . . .

Mexico. The arena of a vast circus. A bull-fight is in full swing. The barbaric magnificence of this play of blood, gilt and sand wildly enthralled me. "But, you know, Mayakovsky didn't like it", I am told by a Mexican comrade who accompanied Mayakovsky to a similar spectacle . . . Evidently we look at some things differently.

But almost the same evening I get a letter from Moscow, from Maxim Straukh. On basic matters Mayakovsky and I see eye to eye; Straukh writes that V.V. has seen my rural film *The Old and the New*, also concerned with bulls, but the pedigree kind. He watched with great fascination and considered it the best film he had seen. He was even going to send a cable across the ocean . . . The cable didn't come: Mayakovsky was no more.



Before me, amusing and resembling a Ukrainian embroidery, are his sketches of the Mexican countryside.

Our views on bull-fights were different.

On other fights—the same.

—April 5, 1940.

From *Iskusstvo Kino*, 1, 1958.
First publication.
Tr. M.M.

Soviet Novels of 1957

Robert Daglish

AS last year's awards show, the standard set by the Lenin Prize Committee is far higher than that of the old committee for Stalin prizes. This is partly due to certain organisational changes. Far fewer prizes are awarded (the maximum for the arts is eight) and there is no stipulation that a certain proportion of them should be awarded in each field. But the most important feature of the new system is the insistence that any novel or other work of art should become widely known to the public before it can be considered by the awards committee. Under the old system a novel serialised in a magazine could be awarded a Stalin prize within two months of publication, thus in some cases reducing the idea of recommendation and discussion by public organisations and individuals to mere formality.

When I discussed this with the secretary to the committee, he said: "We don't want to award Lenin prizes to books that will be forgotten within a year." The committee, he told me, is much influenced by public opinion and receives hundreds of letters a week, many of which, coming from people who have found a special message for themselves in a particular work of art, carry a great deal of conviction.

Over thirty works of literature (novels, poetry, film scripts and so on) were recommended for Lenin prizes this year by trade unions, theatre companies, scientific institutes and other organisations, as well as individuals. The list was published in the press in January. After two months' discussion the committee, which consists of forty-six prominent people in the arts, has narrowed it down to five names for the final voting. To be successful they must obtain twenty-three votes. At least two-thirds of the committee must vote.

What are the main features of the discussions at clubs, libraries, factories and offices which will have influenced the committee in arriving at its final decision?

If 1956 was a year of iconoclasm in literature, the activities of the critics in 1957 have been mainly devoted to seeing that this process does not go too far, while ensuring that the old idols do not rise again. It has been no easy task, and those of them who have assumed that the sharp criticism of *Not by Bread Alone* meant a return to the days when authors could be bitterly indicted for their literary errors have burned their fingers on public opinion. When Sofronov last November concluded an article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* by lumping together all the people he disagreed with (the contributors to the much-criticised almanac *Literaturnaya Moskva* and the editors of the magazine *Teatr*) as "literary epileptics" he aroused such a storm of protest that he was obliged to withdraw his statement in the next article of the series and, I am told, to rewrite much in his further articles.

Sofronov, however, is not important as a critic. Far more interesting and constructive is the discussion that has been going on round Galina Nikolayeva's latest novel, *A Battle on the Way**, an English translation of which is to be produced by the Foreign Languages Publishing House here.

Recommended for a Lenin prize by the magazine *Oktyabr*, the Moscow Arts Theatre and the Moscow Drama Theatre, and by Professor Bradis of the Kalinin Pedagogical Institute, this novel is by far the most controversial work of 1957. It opens with the first literary picture to be given by a Soviet novelist of Stalin's funeral. The mood of alarm mingled with curiosity, grief tempered by a faith in the continuity of things, which prevailed in those days, and which

* Published in English in *Soviet Literature*, 1, 1958.

I for one can still vividly remember, seems to me utterly authentic. "We are on the eve of changes. But what changes? What would die with this death? What would live on for ever?" In this setting we are introduced to two of the main characters, Valgan the manager of a large engineering works, and Bakhirev his new chief engineer. Valgan is a type already made familiar to us by such novels as Granin's *Those Who Seek*, an unscrupulous, power-loving careerist, well versed in the craft of bureaucracy. Bakhirev, difficult to get on with, intelligent but stubborn and tactless, has the supreme virtue of complete honesty, and it is this that inevitably brings him into conflict with Valgan. The heroine of the book is Tina, whose first husband, considerably older than herself and a prominent figure in the Party, has been arrested on a false charge and has died in prison. Tina slowly recovers from the shock of losing her sheltered world and all that it stands for, marries a young engineer and gets a job at the works where Valgan is the manager. She then falls in love with Bakhirev, who himself has a wife and two children, and allows him to take her off to a squalid hut on the outskirts of the city, where they meet secretly until they are by chance discovered by Bakhirev's wife.

While all this is going on Bakhirev is in bitter conflict with Valgan over the tractors the plant is putting out, which are both inefficient and dangerous. Valgan, with the help of such associates as Blikin, a Party man doped by the personality cult, succeeds in getting Bakhirev thrown out of his job. Eventually, however, with the support of the Party and the men at his works, Bakhirev exposes Valgan.

Though on a more professional level than most of the readers' conferences, the discussion by a group of writers and critics at Writers' House in Moscow last February seemed to me to express very much the kind of opinions that I had heard about the book everywhere.

As the critic Ozerov, who opened the discussion, pointed out, the novel discusses practically every problem in contemporary Soviet life, from the fixing of pay rates to adultery. He appreciated the author's sense of the present, but felt that the grotesque element in the description of Stalin's funeral was out of place. He was immediately taken up on this last point by the writer Zlobin. The grotesque element was out of place at Stalin's funeral, but nevertheless it was there, and by describing it Nikolayeva had made her picture all the more realistic. Zlobin's criticism was that she had spent too much time telling the story of Tina's early life, which had no direct connection with the rest of the novel, while failing to explain the character of a man like Valgan, a product of the personality cult and wartime days, when personal glory was easily obtained by exploiting the patriotic enthusiasm of one's staff. Several speakers pointed out the contrast between the hero of *Not by Bread Alone*, who ignores the Party and fails, and Bakhirev, who turns to the Party for help and succeeds, but there was a difference of opinion as to whether Nikolayeva had profited by Dudintsev's error or not.

Most of the speakers condemned the way the love story was handled as cheap and novelettish, but Trifonova, a well-known critic, praised Nikolayeva for tackling the problem of adultery. There was no point in closing one's eyes to the fact that it existed, she said, and writers should try to give answers to the questions the public was asking. How many times had Soviet divorce laws been revised, and yet we still had not found a satisfactory solution to the problem.

The problems in *A Battle on the Way* have certainly made the book widely discussed, but artistically, as I have heard from many people, readers as well as professional critics, she fails to make them an organic part of the story. Because of this, and because it is still only available in the magazines, the committee considers it to be in too raw a state for submission to the final vote,

but I am told that it may well be in the running for an award next year when it appears in book form.

One does not feel this lack of integration at all in Pavel Nilin's two excellent short novels of work in the Cheka in the early days after the revolution. The first of these stories, *Cruelty**, deals with the age-long problem of expediency. With bandit gangs and remnants of Whiteguard detachments scouring the country, life in the backwoods of Siberia was for a period a good deal more dangerous for the representatives of the new revolutionary government than for the bandits themselves. The protection that could be offered averaged about one militiaman to 150 square miles. It was a situation where there was plenty of excuse for unscrupulousness, and the head of the local Cheka is unscrupulous. But there are men in his detachment who are willing to take any risk in order to maintain a code of honour of the highest order. Venka Malishev, the hero of the story, drawn carefully and lovingly through the eyes of his young assistant (neither of them is much more than twenty), persuades a captured bandit, in return for a promise of reprieve, to help the Cheka in arresting the leader of a gang they have been hunting. This is in itself an act of faith and courage of a kind which his chief has no time for, since in those wild, wooded regions there can be no guarantee against treachery.

When the operation is a success (it is all described with unusual depth and a true Siberian mysteriousness) the chief steals the credit for himself and refuses to grant the reprieve. Venka, who at the time mistakenly supposes that his girl-friend has jilted him, under the weight of the double blow commits suicide.

The same theme of the need to retain one's humanity when it is most tempting not to do so runs through the second story, *A Period of Trial*, which is much less tragic and is told with a humour that reminds one of Makarenko, though it is more subtle. As yet he writes in a limited field, but Nilin is to my mind one of the best craftsmen and one of the most right-thinking people in Soviet literature today. A notable thing about his work is that his most positive characters (they cannot really be divided into two categories) are utterly convincing. It is good to know that this work has been particularly popular with the young people here.

One of the books on the list which I mention because it should certainly be translated is Marietta Shaginyan's *The Ulyanov Family*†. One so often hears people who have their own special theories about Marxism exclaim "Oh, but Lenin was not a worker himself!" that it is interesting to read just what kind of non-proletarian family Lenin came from. It is also a question of considerable historical interest, on which very little reliable material is available. Though written in the form of a novel, Shaginyan's work is based on archive material to which few have had access. When it first appeared about twenty years ago it was approved as authentic by Lenin's wife and his younger brother. The writing is fresh and it gives us a fascinating picture of provincial Russia from the time of the emancipation of the serfs to the day of Lenin's birth in 1870.

Two of the works which have satisfied the committee in the discussions of the past two months and will be put up for the final voting are Sholokhov's story *The Fate of a Man*‡ and Stelmakh's *Human Blood is not Water*§. One puts them together because both writers come from the steppelands of the south, and they resemble each other in their feeling for the soil and in their style of writing; though he writes in Ukrainian, Stelmakh owes much to Sholokhov. But the thing that really links them is the feeling that man must

* Published in English in *Soviet Literature*, 1, 1958.

† *Neva*, 1957, No. 7.

‡ See page for a review of the English translation.

§ Published in English as *Let the Blood of Man Not Flow*, in *Soviet Literature*, 2, 1958.

come first. Heroism, achievement and self-sacrifice are great things, but they cannot go on making up for the loss of human lives. Sholokhov's story of a lorry driver who, owing to the war, loses nearly everything except his own kindness and his determination to live decently and for the good of his fellow men has been translated into English and there is perhaps no need to retell it here. It is a story that defies the seeker for new trends and problems. When I asked a friend of mine to explain its popularity he simply said : " I suppose it is because Sholokhov writes of something that has happened to so many people."

Stelmakh writes of the Ukraine at the end of the civil war, when the land was just being shared out among the labourers and poor peasants. Their longing for the land and the fear which they have to overcome to take it from their former masters are poignantly described. And there is a vein of earthy humour in the book that sets off the gentle but persistent sadness of the Ukrainian folk song which recurs all through the story :

*Human blood is not water ;
Let it not be spilled . . .*

The two other prose works that have survived the process of elimination (the fifth candidate is the poet Lugovskoi) are Kozhevnikov's *To Meet the Dawn** and Mukhtar's *Sisters*†, both of which will appear in translation this year. Kozhevnikov tells a story of life in Siberia after the revolution through the eyes of a small boy whose parents have decided to stay in the place to which they were exiled by the tsarist government. Mukhtar Askar's novel deals with the same period in Turkmenistan, with a love story and emancipation from the veil playing a large part.

Though all the books I have mentioned have fine qualities, it is by no means certain that even one of them will be awarded a Lenin prize. Nikolayeva has the contemporary scope, Sholokhov and Stelmakh have the feeling and the poetry, Nilin has the humanity and narrative skill, but there is no one work that combines all these qualities, and that is what the committee and, I think, the Soviet public are waiting for.

* *Znamya*, 2 and 3, 1956 and 8, 9 and 10, 1957.

† *Druzhba narodov*, 1957, Nos. 1, 2, 3.

The above article was written before the announcement of the 1957 Lenin Prize awards on April 22, 1958. In the event no prize was awarded for literature, cinema or painting. The absence of an award in these fields provoked an outburst of disagreement. A group of metal-workers at the Hammer and Sickle Works in Moscow wrote in protest to *Pravda*, pressing the claims of Sholokhov's short story and Stelmakh's novel (discussed above) and of the film *Quiet Flows the Don*. The editor of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, novelist V. Kochetov, asked "What happened, dear comrades?" and, though conceding that the members of the jury might not have had time to read all the books submitted, found it strange that after viewing six art exhibitions they had not felt one artist's work worthy of a prize. Many others expressed dissatisfaction with the Lenin Prize Committee's decision. No one disagreed, however, with the award of prizes to Shostakovich's 11th Symphony and Chabukiani's ballet *Othello*.

Letters and Telegrams

Anatoly Alexin

Letter 1

Honestly, you take everything very calmly, I must say. The sanatorium here is full of dashing young fellows. Full of them, do you hear? And they are all getting to know me: their first visit is to the doctor. I talk to them about pine baths, and they reply, "*What are you doing tonight?*" Not all of them, of course; but most of them.

There's a pilot here, with the strength of a TU-104. He comes to the surgery every day. Sometimes he complains of sleeplessness, so I give him a powder; and the next day he's lost his appetite, so I give him a tablet. Well, I have to.

Yesterday one of the cleaners—Anna Leontyevna, a nosy old crosspatch—came and complained to me that the pilot throws the tablets away as soon as he's outside the surgery door, and they get trampled on and leave chalky marks all over the corridor.

I'm fed up with hearing the same joke every evening. "Here's our grass widow! Boy, will we give your boy-friend a piece of our mind! He's in no great hurry, is he?" That's true enough, anyway. What makes you think I'll wait? Oh well, of course I will: I promised, didn't I?

So did you, though. Don't you remember, that day in Moscow, when I got the appointment to this sanatorium in the south (thanks to you, too), you said "*I'll just fly to Siberia to get material for my article, and then I'll come straight to you in the Crimea. I'll sit under palms and cypresses and write about firs and pines.*" Don't you remember? You must have collected enough material for dozens of articles by this time, but you still don't come.

You get that envelope full of documents out of that brown file of yours and find the little medical certificate. It's not just a certificate, Andrei, it's the truth. Your lungs *are* bad. You *need* the south and the dry Crimean air. Chekhov wasn't ashamed to live here by the sea, why should you be? There's more goes on here than just relaxing, you know. This is where *The Cherry Orchard* was written.

I expect a wire from you. Not a letter. A *wire*. Train number, carriage number. Don't forget!—*M*.

PS.—If you just could *see* the room they've given me! It's so sunny, and there are bunches of grapes right under the window!

Letter 2

Dearest Marina,

If you could only *see* this place! Only three months ago the lush inaccessible taiga reigned supreme. Now the stupid roaring of the bears is drowned in the concentrated, business-like roaring of the tractors. The hammering of the lonely, persistent woodpecker is muffled in the cheery battering of hundreds of hammers. The lazy sound of the pine-trees is lost in the rapid humming of the saws and the staccato tones of the electric motors.

But the taiga has not retreated very far. Last night a giant bear, grown bold on honey, took the wrong turning and lay down to sleep in a shallow pit. He must have taken it for the comfortable lair where he and his shaggy family live.

The taiga is right next door. Perhaps that's why everything here takes on a heroic fairy-tale quality. The wonders of technology amid the wonders of nature; isn't it all terrific?

The people here are working like horses! They are deeply struck with this

part of the world, but they don't call it home yet. That will not come for some time. How happy they would be if they could only transplant the far-off roads and streets where they were born, where they first quarrelled and made up, skated and tobogganned, set off for school in the mornings! They call the big clearing (where the factory management buildings are going up) *Arbat Square* (just imagine!); and a rather hilly street, with grass still growing on it, is *Nevsky Prospect*!

We began to issue a newspaper a fortnight ago. Factory papers usually come out once or twice a week, but ours is daily. There'll be a town here soon, and then the factory paper will turn into a proper local newspaper.

For the time being the editorial staff is crammed into one tiny room, leading out of another one. The staff isn't very big. Editor. Secretary (me). One literary assistant. We're supposed to be getting a typist, but haven't found one yet. You can imagine the shortage of people when a journalist who has only just left the institute is made secretary! And what happens if they can't find us a typist? Our editor is a dyed-in-the-wool journalist. He sniffs each edition from cover to cover. Revels in printers' ink. This, says he, is more to my taste than all your pines or even the most exquisite flowers! The editor has three sacred principles: *Pungent headlines! Imaginative sub-heads! Original layout!* He says we've got to produce a *jet-age* paper, never give the readers stuff only fit for lighting fires with!

I have to hold the editor back a bit, otherwise we'd soon be printing the paper upside down. But he's an interesting chap to work with. Boils with rage, bangs down his ruler, swears like a bargee!

We print *Letters to the Family* in almost every number, on the front page. Honestly, we never add a single sentence of our own, not even a little one. We give them just as they are, with all their "stylistic jerks and jolts", as the Professor used to say. The only thing we do do is perhaps to put the commas back where they belong.

Dearest Marina! Honestly, I didn't mean to let you down. I really did expect to collect material here and then go off to the Crimea, to the sunshine. But the article keeps getting longer. Every day a new chapter is born. I still mean to come to you as soon as I've done it. But when shall I write the last paragraph? Will there ever be one?

I just can't bring myself to ask you to come here from your cosy nest with those grapes under the window.

As ever. Love and kisses,

Your *Andrei*.

Letter 3

So you've got the responsibility of being a secretary, have you? Well, I might as well tell you, I don't think it's responsible of you at all! What about me, and your health, and everything? *Everything*! There's only one way you can save everything we used to care about. Just you resign and fly here. Fly, not just *come*. Fly, do you get it?

I don't care tuppence about your daily wall-newspaper.

I shouldn't call *Letters to the Family* exactly original. It's been done I don't know how many times on the radio. You might have thought up something a bit brighter than that.

Listen, if there was some man with lungs like yours who meant nothing to me at all up there, I'd advise him not to go far into the forest morning or evening, and to keep out in the open in dry places. Weak lungs can't stand the damp. Not that I'm giving you any advice. I couldn't care less about your health, seeing that you don't mind—enjoy maybe—wrecking all our plans and everything. Everything! —*M*.

PS. The dashing pilot—the one that comes every day to get pills—came today in his rest-hour and made “the steepest nose-dive ever”, as he put it. He *proposed* to me. He has just twenty days left before he leaves. Send me your abject excuses by air mail, otherwise I mightn’t get them in time. That might put the pilot out of his misery. I might marry him straight off, just like that, to spite you. You don’t seem to realise what a girl’s capable of when she’s bursting with rage and pining away!

Letter 4

Dearest Marina,

Only fancy! We haven’t found a typist yet! I’m getting on with learning to type. I can do it with one finger now! That’s no use except on an ordinary weekly factory paper, though. For our daily, especially in view of modern building techniques, such antiquated methods are impermissible. So we’ve decided to let the printers have MS copy. It isn’t easy, though. We all do terrible scrawls: sure sign of team genius!

The master printer (the shop is twelve kilometres away, in the district centre, Kamenishch) says he’ll accept MS articles and features—“good clean copy”—for the time being, in view of the exceptional circumstances. But on one strict condition: we’ve got to “bash” Yezerksy, the deputy director of social and transport construction. There’s no difficulty about “bashing” him; but why does our good-tempered director hate him so?

You seem to be very annoyed with our lively editor for some reason. You came out in a rash of banner headlines! You think *Letters to the Family* banal, do you? If you only knew what the letters mean to people who have only just left their homes and families and friends! I know it only too well. If you could only see the queues at the *poste restante* desk! After a hard day’s work they run to the post office before they’ve even had time to eat.

If you could only read the letters! Every one has a style of its own—on paper and in spirit. They write about the taiga, and love, and how they’ve been using cheap rough-hewn blocks instead of bricks, and how you can’t get any curlers and have to do your hair with paper. (Our newspaper’s *some* use, anyway!)

Sometimes they write in to *us*. Not very often, it’s true, but yesterday, on page two, we ran what the editor called a *two-edged* letter from Vasya Yastrebkov, a bricklayer, under the heading *You can keep my record!*

Yastrebkov is bitter about how he did more than ten times over the norm. Yes, bitter. “It wasn’t work, it was the devil and all! The lads all waited on me like slaveys. They fetched the bricks and mortar and got the ground ready for me. I had the whole team dancing round me. So I made a record, and none of them exceeded a single norm. What sort of a carry-on is that?”

It’s only now that I’m working in an editorial office that I realise how people hate criticism. You’ve only got to provoke someone, put their backs up, and the denials start pouring in, the telephone’s ringing like mad, they’ll have the law on you. That’s what happened after that letter. “You are belittling a production record! You are blackening the collective! You *made* Yastrebkov write that lampoon!” The head of the construction office even complained to the Party committee about us. So I’ve got to trot along and explain it all away.

The Party organiser here used to be a hunter. He jokes and teases, and he has an uncanny way of attracting people. He’s the one all our local *truth-seekers* go to. The ones that are in the wrong get his name thrown at them: “Titov’ll be after you!” The ones that are in trouble invoke it. “Better ask Titov, he’ll see us righted!”

Titych, as lots of people call him, knows every tree, bird and flower in the

taiga personally. I've no idea how he got to know about my illness. At first he pulled my leg. "What evil spirit brought *you* here, with such lungs?" Then he said: "You trust the taiga: she'll cure you. With herbs. I'll be going out hunting soon. I'll bring you back a real medicine."

Now we've got to wait and see what sort of herbs, or probably pills, Titych is going to prescribe for the letter that *belittled a production record!*

In haste, but with lots of kisses,

Your *Andrei*.

Letter 5

May I remind you that it is now only twelve days till the pilot leaves?

You fill your letter up with stuff I couldn't care less about. The paper. Records. Rough walling.

Once for all, are you coming, yes or no?—*M*.

PS. I don't know how your talk at the Party committee went off, but I'm sure you're right about Yastrebkov (strange as it may seem). Nobody can be taught anything through lies and deceit. You seem to understand that all right (wonders will never cease!) when it's a question of *public* conscience!

Some of the doctors here are mad on records, too. "Weight" records. They want every patient to put on a few more kilograms. Then they add all the "individual recoveries" together and come to a meeting brandishing whole tons! "In such-and-such a sanatorium in the last quarter, three tons of human weight have been added." Medical higher mathematics! Never mind if all these extra kilograms affect the wind. I hope your building sites don't get short of wind from the *shop-window* records!

And listen: I'm not really worrying particularly about your health any more. (I've washed my hands of the whole affair.) But all the same I can't get over your turning down the Crimean sun with its genuine powers of healing, and putting your faith in quack medicines like herbs! Even if it's the Party organiser that prescribes them. How *can* you think of using herbs without consulting a doctor? Not that I am worrying about you, don't think that. Not at all. I am just astonished you should be so crude. How can anyone so backward work in an editorial office and expect to teach others?

Letter 6

My dearest Marina,

Your bits about the pilot remind me strongly of our daily headlines. *Ten More Days to Completion Date! All Out For A Real Success!* Sorry for the silly comparison, though.

You sound so hard and angry. But the funny thing is that when I read your letter last night, with all that about *couldn't care less* and *wash my hands of it*, I suddenly had a vivid memory of some other letters. I went to my suitcase (still not unpacked) and got out my mother's letters.

Mother often used to be away on special missions, and I was left at home on my own. She used to write to me like this. "I'm sure you've collected a batch of low marks since I've been away. And of course you forget to turn down the gas when you go to bed. I've washed my hands of your future, but all the same, how *can* you spend whole days in a warm bathroom over some wet photo-stills, when Dickens, Turgenev and Mark Twain exist in the world?"

Mother knew perfectly well that I never got any low marks. And if I'd forgotten to turn down the gas even once I should long since have departed this life. But that's the way she used to write. I used to be furious; but when mother died I read the letters again, and then I understood. They were full of love and concern.

Just like yours ! How can I be angry with you ?

How can I be angry, when I love you more than ever ? You must believe me, sweetheart. Only now I'm not worried about you. You have the sun, and the sea, and bunches of grapes under the window. But perhaps your pilot is enough to outweigh all the perils here. Even the damp evening air in my poor lungs, eh ?

No, I don't believe it ! And for what I don't believe I kiss you hard.

Andrei.

Letter 7

Dearest Marina,

I got back from the printers a moment ago. I haven't even had time to take my coat off, I'm in such a hurry to tell you about Vladislav Petrovich Yezerky. Our youngsters call him *Vladik*, short for *Lord of Houses and Flats*. Another name for him is *Our Ref*—short for *refuse*. There are all sorts of parasite words. Some people are lavish with their pet phrase *so to speak*, and others can't get on without *you see* ; but what Vladislav Petrovich's evil tongue pronounces most easily and with the greatest satisfaction is that word *refuse*.

For example, he didn't give us any premises for the printing press, though he could have found us something. He'd rather we tramped into Kamenishch and back several times a day.

In short, *let not my right hand know . . .* That's what we've called our feature article. *We Speak To Comrade Yezerky's Left Hand !*

And, just imagine, *Vladik* got to know about the article beforehand. No, he didn't have to ferret anything out. The director of the printing works spilt the beans. Yezerky refused to supply him with any new type (" You've got into a bad enough mess with the old stuff "), and the director answered him back : " We'll give you *mess*, and serve you right ! Front page tomorrow ! "

Vladik took urgent steps. First of all, he dashed into the Party committee. But the old hunter said : " I've been keeping my sights on you for quite a while myself, Yezerky. Let the paper fire the first round, though. You'll soon get a taste of what these *pen and paper robbers* can do. "

Do you think *Vladik* gave up ? Oh no ! On the way out he took the car we usually drive to the printers in, and I had to walk ten kilometres through the forest in the dark. (That's the shortest way.)

The paper will come out late tomorrow. We're putting in bold type on the back page : " This issue did not come out on time, owing to the fact that the hero of today's feature article, Vladislav Petrovich Yezerky, on the orders of his left hand, again refused and did not give us a car to get to the printers. " If it's a fight he's after, we're ready.

Andrei.

PS. Forgive me ! For the first time in my life I forgot to kiss you ! What a brute I am ! I'm dropping with exhaustion ! Forgive me !

Letter 8

This may sound hackneyed, but I'm quite convinced. Time is the best healer. Not so very long ago, I should have been scared stiff to hear of you, with your lungs, walking ten kilometres through a damp forest at night. But now your lunacy (yes, lunacy, are you listening ?) doesn't affect me in the least. Not one little bit !

At the risk of my remarks about the pilot reminding you of your newspaper *headlines*, might I venture to inform you once again that he is leaving in a week's time ? He very much wants to know my answer before he leaves. For my sake he is willing to get a transfer to a steady job here in the Crimea as

a teacher in a flying school. I can see that he really loves me, unlike you. Yes, yes, yes! *Really* loves me! *Unlike* you!

Don't imagine for a moment that I would ever come to that wild forest country of yours. It would mean that I had no self-respect, did not value my work, and, above all, cared nothing about your health. Though of course I really have no further interest in that.

The Yezersky affair that you filled your last letter with interests me very little, but somehow I feel sure you wrote a feature without any real punch to it. Since when have you learnt to write feature articles? It would be interesting to find out. Send me a copy of this *fighting broadsheet* of yours.

And I've got something else to say, too. Any self-respecting editorial board would have got a permanent printing-press of their own long since, and not go driving their staff out through the forest at night. However, that's your business.

Are you coming to the Crimea or not? This is the last time of asking. The very last!—M.

PS. What was the end of the "records" story? Who won?

Letter 9

Beloved Marina,

Today I went to the building site of a new block of flats, which look out on to our local Kreshchatik on one side and on the other across to the large forest lake. I meant to get material for an article. But I didn't . . .

I wandered about the half-built floors and kept on thinking: "If only Marina and I could move into this room! Or this one . . . Or even that one . . . We'd put the writing desk and a bookcase over there. And in this corner would be Marina's own little world; doctor's instruments, a faint smell of perfume, and an electric iron on the ironing-board . . . I know she likes to get every crease in her dress ironed out . . . From the balcony, Marina could look straight down into the surface of the lake, like a mirror, so pure you can see the colour of the pebbles lying at the bottom . . . In the evenings, maybe, we'd sit here and read aloud. We could look down on the sparks from the electric welders . . ."

Dreams, dreams!

On the third floor some young plasterers, lads from the trade school, came dashing up. "Where's your paper?" they shouted. "It's dinner-time, and there's no paper! What kind of workers are you, eh?" I told them that only *Pravda* comes out on Mondays. They knew that for themselves, of course. They'd been working over the weekend and they'd got Sunday mixed up with a normal working day, that's why they hadn't realised it was Monday.

Well, they started to apologise. But why should they? I was so pleased that they'd dashed up to me! It means that our paper is liked and looked forward to.

Liked and looked forward to! Fine words, Marina.

Goodness, I almost forgot! You wanted to know what was the end of the fight over the now famous "record" won by Yastrebkov. In the end the Party organiser said to the head of the construction office: "We've got nothing against high results, but we can't stand window-dressing." Everyone burst out laughing. We wanted to use his words as a headline on page two, but Titych wouldn't let us. "You're not using *me* to build up any personality cult!"

I've sent you not only the article on Yezersky you asked for, but a whole lot of copies of our paper, which you so disrespectfully describe as a *wall-newspaper*, or *fighting broadsheet*. Read them through, and let me have some deadly rockets. *Critical. Ballistic.*

Andrei.

PS. By the way, we got a typist on the editorial staff yesterday. We've found one at last. The search is over. She's nineteen and comes from Leningrad. No comment. But all the males on the staff (except me) came to work in new suits today.

First Telegram

ANDREI PLATOV STOP EDITORIAL BOARD FACTORY PAPER
STOP FACTORY SITE STOP KAMENISHCH.

LEAVING TENTH STOP EXPRESS THIRTY-THREE STOP CAR-
RIAGE SEVEN STOP MARINA STOP.

Second Telegram

MARINA KRYLOVA STOP CARRIAGE SEVEN STOP EXPRESS
THIRTY-THREE.

CONGRATULATIONS DEPARTURE STOP ALL LIES RE TYPIST
STOP EXPECTING YOU STOP LOVE YOU STOP LOTS OF KISSES
STOP YOUR ANDREI

From Yunost, December 1957.

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Survey & Book Reviews

Vestnik Istorii Mirovoi Kul'tury

Robert Browning

THE new journal *Vestnik Istorii Mirovoi Kul'tury*, published in bi-monthly numbers by the Historical Section of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, is an international publication in several senses. In the first place it originates in the work of the Soviet members of the UNESCO committee charged with the production of a six-volume *History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind*, and its publication is envisaged as a furtherance of the work of that committee. The committee's terms of reference are to demonstrate the contribution which all peoples have made to the common fund of world civilisation, and to examine the growing unification of human society the world over. It publishes its own special journal (*Journal of World History*, *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale*, *Cuadernos de Historia Mundial*) in English, French and Spanish, as well as encouraging in various ways the publication of similar journals in member countries. The *Vestnik* publishes material—discussion summaries, synopses, drafts and so on—issued by the committee in the course of its work, and reprints many items from the *UNESCO Information Bulletin*.

Secondly, the *Vestnik* publishes articles by scholars from outside the Soviet Union, either specially written for it or reproduced from other journals. The first four numbers (January-August 1957) include contributions from Chicago, Jakarta, Kyoto, London, Princeton, Stockholm and Yale. Many of these represent points of view not often expressed in Soviet circles, and perhaps unfamiliar or even distasteful to many Soviet readers.

Thirdly, the main articles are all accompanied by résumés in English, French or German, and each number contains a series of lengthy reviews in these languages of recent works published in the Soviet Union. These reviews occupy an average of forty pages a number.

The field of interest of the *Vestnik* would be hard to define, but can easily be illustrated by listing a few of the titles of main articles in the first four numbers.

- MARSHALL HODGSON (Chicago). Inter-Regional Hemispheric History as a Method for the Study of World History.
- V. G. CHILDE (London). Archaeological Documents on the Prehistory of Science.
- V. V. IVANOV (Moscow). The Social Organisation of the Indo-European Tribes in the light of Linguistic Evidence.
- K. YOSHIKAWA (Kyoto). Chinese Poetry in Japan: Influence and Result.
- E. S. MARKARIAN (Moscow). The Conception of Social Revolution in the Philosophy of History.
- H. N. MOMDZHIAN (Moscow). The Ideology of Social Pessimism.
- M. I. RADOVSKY (Leningrad). Russian-American Scientific Relations in the 18th and 19th Centuries.
- I. E. VERTSMAN (Moscow). Rembrandt in the Eyes of Russian Artists and Critics in the 19th Century.
- A. P. KAZHDAN (Moscow). Fundamental Problems of Byzantine History.
- S. TAKDIR ALISHABANA (Jakarta). The Development of the Language and Literature of Indonesia.
- Y. K. KOPELEVICH AND T. A. KRASOTKINA (Leningrad). The Letters of Leonard Euler in Soviet Archives.
- E. A. ARAB-OGLY (Moscow). The Cultural-Historical Concept of Arnold Toynbee.

The history of world civilisation, as understood by the editors of the *Vestnik*, is largely the history of man's ways of looking at and analysing his activities as a social animal. There is not much of the history of his understanding and control of the universe outside of his own society, of the history of science and technology. This, the reviewer feels, is a shortcoming. Lines of thought and fruitful hypotheses in the natural sciences and the humanities are always interacting with one another, and to treat either group in isolation is to distort it. The relation between social and biological thinking in the middle of the nineteenth century is a case in point. However, this division—the split mind of modern society—is to some extent institutionalised in the organisation of universities and research institutes the world over, and the Soviet Union is no exception. Historians simply never meet historians of science, who work in a different place and publish in different journals and attend different congresses. But it really is high time they did begin to meet; and it is much to be hoped that the Historical Section of the Academy of Sciences will draw into collaboration with it workers in the various scientific sections in a deliberate effort to bridge this gap. There are few more important tasks which the *Vestnik* could perform.

This general reservation made, one can have nothing but praise for the new journal. It is completely free from the kind of dogmatic, quotation-mongering approach which has sometimes marred Soviet work in the historical and ideological field in the past. It presents the ideas of western scholars clearly and fairly, as often as not in their own words. And when it joins issue with them it does not distort their views or impute disreputable motives to them in order to gain an easy victory. A good example is the discussion of Toynbee's *Study of History* by Professor Arab-Ogly (No. 4, pp. 3-22). It is very difficult for a Marxist scholar to take Toynbee seriously and to believe that he really means what he says. The temptation to spoil one's case by accusing him of having his tongue in his cheek is overwhelming. But Arab-Ogly assumes that Toynbee is sincere, presents a number of facts which he believes to be inconsistent with his hypotheses, and then sketches briefly the answers which a Marxist might give to some of the problems treated by Toynbee.

Among the most interesting sections of the journal are those containing drafts of the UNESCO *History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind* followed by critiques from Soviet scholars, replies by the authors, and sometimes continued discussion of points in dispute. Arguments between Soviet and western scholars have tended in the past, following the pattern set by the statesmen, to consist of denunciations hurled by both sides from prepared positions, from which neither has the least intention of moving. Here we have something very different: honest critical examination in the course of collaborating on practical tasks. It is not always easy. Terms are used differently: what for one side is a statement of objective fact may for the other be a mere rude noise, and disputants tend to assume that their opponent means what they think he ought to mean, and not what he actually says. But misunderstandings are cleared up, modifications and additions are accepted, and where agreement cannot be reached both points of view are allowed to appear side by side in the draft.

Apart from trivialities and details, the Soviet contribution to these discussions is marked by two main features. The first is their insistence on abandoning once for all the old Europe-centred view of history. The original authors, to do them justice, strive to attain the œcumenical view which befits the servants of a world organisation. But time and again their Soviet colleagues are able to point out omissions, faults of emphasis, failure to connect things which ought to be connected. Suggestions of this kind are almost always accepted, often with a request to the Soviet critic to prepare a new draft of the section in question.

The second feature of the Soviet contribution is the insistence upon penetrating beneath political and military factors to the economic realities which, in the view of the Soviet critics, always underlie them, and upon seeing in the conflict between economically determined classes the mainspring of historical development. One example out of many, selected more or less at random, is the treatment of the different resistance offered by the eastern and western Roman empires to the barbarian invasions. The French scholars who drew up the draft of Volume III of the *History* mention as the main factors enabling the eastern empire to withstand the barbarians the fortifications of Constantinople and the skilful diplomacy of the Byzantines (incidentally, this is a very inadequate representation of non-Marxist thought upon the subject). The Soviet critics reply that this will not do. Reference must be made, they say, to the greater economic strength of the eastern empire, which should be discussed in some detail. They go on to suggest that the main reason for this greater economic strength is to be found in the fact that slavery played a less dominant role in production in the east than in the west, and that hence the crisis of slave production took a less sharp form there. The French editors at once accept the first point, but express doubt about the second, while undertaking to present the Soviet point of view side by side with their own in the final text, so that the reader may decide for himself which seems to fit the facts better.

The reviews of recent Soviet books will be of great interest to students unable to read Russian. They are fairly lengthy, and expository rather than critical in character. Works discussed in the first four numbers include: Volumes I and II of the new Soviet *Universal History*; G. V. Knorozov's proposed decipherment of ancient Maya writing; B. R. Vipper's book on sixteenth-century Italian painting; a new history of French literature; the first volume of the report of the Novgorod excavations; Academician Tyumenev's comprehensive study of the economy of Sumeria; a new edition of the works of Leonardo da Vinci; books on Benjamin Franklin and on the eighteenth-century German democrats; a two-volume history of philosophical and political ideas in Russia; the first three volumes of the complete edition of Stanislavsky; a history of the natural sciences in Russia; the early volumes of a mammoth history of art; some new Voltaire letters; a new history of philosophy; an enormous monograph on the influence of Tolstoy; and so on. It is an impressive list. These reviews will be particularly valuable inasmuch as workers in the humanities and the social sciences, less well served by abstracts and bibliographies than their colleagues in the natural sciences, are often ignorant of work being done in the Soviet Union in their own field, and still less in touch with what is being done in neighbouring fields.

Enough has been said to give some idea of the scope and style of the new journal. It ought obviously to be taken by all university libraries, and indeed is already being taken by many. But we should not stop there. Public libraries might be asked to subscribe. There are really plenty of Russian readers about, and much appears in other languages in every number. And almost anyone who thinks about man's development and how we came to reach our present state will find the *Vestnik* useful and interesting. The potential readership in this country ought to be something like that which exists for the Pelican historical and archaeological volumes.

The choice facing the western world today is whether to live with the Russians or to die with them. Most people prefer the former alternative; but they often have deep misgivings, which friends of the Soviet Union must treat seriously and with respect. The new journal should help to allay some of these misgivings, and to suggest that to those with their wits about them living with the Russians may be a stimulating and satisfying experience.

Vestnik Istorii Mirovoi Kul'tury: Review of the History of World Culture.

GUIDE FOR TOURISTS

Going to Russia? Kathleen Taylor. (Lawrence and Wishart, 13/6.)

THOSE who are planning to visit the Soviet Union will find this guide to Russia of unique value and importance. It is also well worth careful study by those who realise the urgency and heavy responsibility of East-West understanding and co-operation.

Mrs. Kathleen Taylor lived and worked in the USSR for ten years before the war. Recent visits have obviously brought her knowledge and experience of life in the Soviet Union up to date. Her aim in this book is not only to give the latest information on tourist developments, currency problems, hotels, transport, ships, churches, museums, parks, exhibitions, and so on. She introduces the reader to everyday life in modern Russia, where "a seething pioneer-like excitement pervades vast new social experiments". She avoids political bias and dogmatism and gives the historical background necessary to understand the problems and opportunities which confront the average citizen in a population of 200 millions, made up of 189 nationalities, speaking 200 known languages and practising forty religions, ranging from Greek Orthodox to Moham-medanism. *Russia*, says an old peasant proverb, *is not a country, it is a world*.

Probably the most important achievement of the Soviet revolution has been the obvious reality and strength of racial co-operation and equality. This book is full of interesting illustrations.

It is not surprising that Kathleen Taylor, in writing of the historical suffering of the Russian peoples, refers to the famous legend of Prometheus, who roused the anger of Olympus by his stolen gift of fire to man. Prometheus was bound to one of the great rocks of Mount Elbrus in the Caucasus, where his vitals "were torn eternally by vultures" as punishment for his "crime". The Prometheus legend has a message for the student of international affairs today.

E. V. TEMPEST.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

Russia, the Atom and the West. George F. Kennan. (Oxford University Press, 10/6.)

IN these Reith lectures Mr. Kennan sought to analyse the policy and achievements of Russia and her impact on the West. In writing of the Soviet economy, he regards with amazement the enormous progress made in twelve years, during which time the Russian people have not only recovered from war devastations, but have carried forward a programme of industrialisation which has made Russia second only to the United States.

In discussing the problem of eastern and central Europe, Mr. Kennan feels that the West is expecting too much when Moscow is asked to abandon the military and political bastion it won in 1941-45, without any compensatory western withdrawal.

Russia is concerned in that great arc of territory running from China's southern frontier through southern Asia and the Middle East to Suez and North Africa. Mr. Kennan feels we are unrealistic to believe Russian influence could and should be completely excluded from the entire area, for it is perfectly natural that Russia should have her place there.

Like many others, he is convinced that belief in the inevitability of war (itself the worst disservice to peace) has grown unchecked. He has here dealt admirably with a highly controversial subject in a factual and objective manner.

MONICA WHATELY.

EMBASSY WATCHMAN

A Cockney in Moscow. Harold Elvin. (Cresset Press, 21/-.)

WHY do foreigners visiting Moscow always want to see ballet, though most of them have never been to it in their own countries? Hackett, the hero of this book, gives his answer: "It's the legs."

Our cockney in Moscow had an answer for everything, even in the midst of air-raids. Dealing with a high official who is Russian-perfect but refuses to speak it because he is bitter about the régime—or with brass-hats and those who despite the horrors of war still live in their Victorian class-ideas—calls for action by the two irresistible characters 'Arold and Hackett.

The Russian character is shown in its humanness in many ways, such as the militiaman who had to stop the Embassy car, not because he wanted to see passports, but simply to speak to his British allies.

'Arold's maxim, *The more I hear the less I believe*, is something we should all ponder. Although politics do not often come into the book, the broadmindedness of the Russians is mentioned several times. Another side of the said maxim is shown by the "expert on Russia" who has lived in the Embassy for ten years and never goes out. The real expert is friend Hackett: an official admits that *that cockney makes the professional politicians look like idiots—he loves the world and all the world loves him*.

We would like to know more about the adventures of our cockneys; you feel you have really lived with them in Moscow, and that after all the Russians are no different from us.

H. W. KING.

WILL THE RUSSIANS BE FIRST ON THE MOON?

Soviet Sputniks. (Soviet News, 1/3.)

Sputnik Into Space. M. Vassiliev and Prof. V. V. Dobronravov. (Souvenir Press, 15/-.)

WHEN, in mid-1954, I wrote an article for a million-plus mass circulation weekly entitled *Will the Russians Be First on the Moon?* I was laughed at for posing such a question. I could no more answer the question affirmatively then than I can today. But I was concerned to make clear that a tremendous technological revolution was taking place in the USSR of which we were in the main deliberately ignorant.

When, one year later, I heard Professor S. Veksler, leading Soviet physicist, at the first UN Atoms-for-Peace Conference in Geneva read a paper on a proposed new atom-smashing machine, my colleague—a leading British theoretical physicist—turned to me and said: “This is it! Now we’ll have to sit up and take notice.” He was not wrong, for the famous American physicist Ernest Lawrence followed in publicly declaring his wonderment at the great Russian project.

Then, last October, came Sputnik 1957 Alpha. I was in North America at the time. Our American colleagues were shattered—and for the first time real attention came to be paid to the Soviet educational system and to Soviet science.

These two publications are an expression of great achievement. They are filled with a confidence that is extraordinary in the manner in which they detail “the next great steps to the moon and beyond”.

Soviet Sputniks is simple and easily written, with good illustrations. It is based on material published by the leading Soviet scientists concerned with the great enterprise. It makes the essential point that the sputnik is basically a scientific tool—and nowhere did I find any mention of military implications.

Sputnik Into Space is an English translation of the Italian translation of the original Russian. It suffers accordingly. I suppose “technicological” is an English word, but “technological” is much better.

The book cries out for an index. I am not clear whether Dobronravov (p. 120) is an error for Dobronravov, and from the internal evidence it may not be. But the book is filled with excellent detail of all aspects of space travel.

Why go to the moon? For the Russians this is almost an irrelevant question. They are certain it will be “the first world on which our space-men will set foot”.

And when will this be? One Professor Dobronravov names the year 2000, and for this he is rebuked. “These dates must be considered on the pessimistic side. De-

spite the complexity of the problems involved, we are of the opinion that it will be very much in advance of that . . .” say the authors.

According to Dr Harold C. Urey, American Nobel prizewinner, the world is divided into two groups of people, “those who would like to know what the moon is like and those who wish to go to the moon”. He is one of the former, so he spends a great deal of time studying it to see what we can learn from what we can now see. “Those who wish to go to the moon, by and large, never read anything about it.”

These books demonstrate how completely untrue this is of the USSR—and therein perhaps lies the answer to the question at the head of this review.

M.G.

REASONABLE BUT DIFFICULT

Russian Political Institutions. D. J. R. Scott. (Allen and Unwin, 21/-.)

THE publishers offer this book “primarily to meet the need of university students for a good account of the political institutions of the Soviet Union”. The wealth of material makes it the best recent book for this purpose, a compact book of references drawn from the best of the voluminous American research, supplemented by a good deal of material from Soviet sources.

The factual information about Soviet political institutions is placed in a broader context of their history and of the society which has produced them. This background material, however, is scrappy and not always illuminating.

In the opening pages Dr Scott boldly states that “judgment is acceptable only in so far as its standards are Russian”. He tries to live up to this in most passages. The picture which emerges, however, is an odd one, since the Russian standards are those critical ones to be found in Soviet sources drawing attention to shortcomings. The bibliography does not refer the student to any Soviet works translated into English in which more positive standards could be found. The only works listed in English are all by people concerned to criticise the Soviet Union from western standards.

Nevertheless, where Dr Scott permits himself to offer his own judgments they are in the main reasonable. Unfortunately many will be deterred by his very difficult style, made worse by the absence of the normal textbook devices of glossary, diagrams, tables of dates, and so on.

M.H.

A VALUABLE WORK

A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations, Vol. 2, 1943-50. W. P. and Z. K. Coates (Lawrence and Wishart, 37/6.)

THIS book follows at a longish interval the first volume, which covered the period from November 7, 1917, to the end of 1942. The new volume carries the history forward from then until just before the outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950.

It is a very valuable book of general and political instruction, giving a full and well-balanced story: it is authoritative not just because the authors have made a long study of the subject, but still more because it is based so largely on authentic documents. The comments of the authors are quiet and restrained; and much of the story inevitably provides its own comment.

Covering a period of close Anglo-American association, the book tends—without ceasing to be what it claims to be, a history of Anglo-Soviet relations—to become also a history of relations between the Soviet Union on one side and the British and American Governments on the other.

The great value of the book is that it brings vividly before readers who have half forgotten the events through which they have lived the whole story of such things as the genesis and development of the cold war.

It is a lively and even entertaining book which we should all read; and we should look forward to Volume 3.

D. N. PRITT.

A SHOLOKHOV STORY

The Fate of Man. Mikhail Sholokhov. Tr. R. Daglish. (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, unpriced.)

THIS is a tragic story of a Russian soldier who endures the war and German captivity with exemplary quiet courage. He loses his entire family, and when nearly broken by disaster finds and adopts a waif who believes him to be his true father. It is perhaps not unfair to describe this work as a *war glossy*, with all Russians (except one whom the hero strangles before he can betray the others) heroes and all Germans blackguards or worse. The author may have felt it necessary to revive fading memories and to tell the young what the war really meant; all the same, such treatment comes strangely from the pen of Sholokhov with his past record of fuller and rounder treatment of human perplexity.

The translation is good, although the use of English slang for Russian does not quite come off. The word "caf" is used for teashop by the six-year-old waif somewhere in the cold and flooded plains of central Russia.

L. CROME.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Alone. N. Virta. **A Tale of Polesie**. L. Obukhova. (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, unpriced.)

THESE two novels appear in English for the first time. Virta's book, written in 1935, is a strong, dramatic, often violent story of a peasant rising against the Bolsheviks in the early years of the Soviet State, and gives an insight into the tangled complex of allegiances dividing families and friends in the confused post-revolution days. The key character is the land-grabbing *greedy wolf* Storozhev, seen from the inside and drawn with powerful strokes.

The translation reads well except for the dialogue, which is often ludicrously out of touch, a prevailing fault in Moscow-produced English translations. Old-fashioned schoolboy expressions rub shoulders with Americanisms and impossible artificialities. (*It's not fibs! A dame has no business here! A fickle scamp like you, eh!*)

Lydia Obukhova's first novel, published in 1955, is a story of post-war life on the newly organised collective farms of Bielorrussian Polesie. Its theme, the gradual overcoming of peasant conservatism, emerges clearly and vigorously enough, though the characters are thin and given to long textbook harangues. It gives a fresh and detailed picture of an unfamiliar country and way of life.

E. MORGAN.

TWO CLASSICS

On the Eve. I. Turgenev. **Six Stories**. L. Tolstoy. (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, unpriced.)

AN insistent drum-beat of impending social upheaval accompanies our reading of a great deal of the Russian literature of the nineteenth century. Throughout the century social comment and the satirical attitude constantly informed the productions of the great novelists, though each seems, in the ultimate analysis, to achieve a purely literary greatness. To the English reader, the literary achievement is of such magnificent proportions that we are content. We will be forgiven for skimming over the passionate social arguments; the controversies are dead, but the characters remain, very much alive, and we go to Turgenev for an experience of pure delight.

In Stepan Apresyan's new translation of *On The Eve* we renew acquaintance with familiar landmarks. Mr Apresyan is to be doubly congratulated, for his courage in attempting the almost untranslatable and for giving us not only the sense but a great deal of the spirit of Turgenev's elusive prose.

While we go to Turgenev for delight, it is perhaps with some vague sense of duty that we go to Tolstoy. English readers

have in general faltered in their further exploration of his genius. However, for those eager to begin or extend their experience of Tolstoy there could be no better possession than the new translation by Margaret Wettlin of six of his short stories, a collection skilfully representative of the whole period of his creative life. A common theme can be traced, extolling the moral power of unpretentious simplicity against the corruption of sophistication. The translations show an astonishingly rich and comprehensive mastery of the English idiom.

W. S. BAILEY.

NOTE

The five FLPH translations reviewed above are all available on loan from the SCR Library.

WARTIME LETTERS

Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman, 1941-45. (Lawrence and Wishart, 25/-.)

THIS book is a translation from the Russian text, published in mid-1957. It is in reality two volumes published as one, the first giving the correspondence between Stalin and Churchill (and later Attlee) between July 8, 1941, and November 15, 1945, and the second the correspondence between Stalin and Roosevelt (and later Truman) between August 4, 1941, and December 23, 1945. The complete correspondence is given; there has been no selection.

It is not a book designed to be read straight through, but it is of great permanent value as a contribution to history, and it is entertaining also to dip into it and read episodes. It gives bit by bit a good picture of the characters of the three main figures, Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt.

D. N. PRITT.

MEDICAL PROGRESS

Soviet Health Service. Vladimir Mayevsky. (Soviet News, 6d.)

THE expectation of life for the average citizen in the Soviet Union has risen from thirty-two to sixty-seven years, only five years or so shorter than in Britain. This is an astonishing accomplishment, and the Soviet health services can claim no small share of the credit. Public health in the USSR embodies some original principles and novel organisational methods, outlined in this pamphlet, with a mass of figures, many of them not previously available. No figures can express, however, the ceaseless toil, mostly unknown and unrewarded, of all the workers, lay and specialist who have built the service to its present-day level.

The text is almost free from derogatory comparisons with other countries, an unnecessary and irritating feature of similar publications in the past. (A footnote stating that the number of doctors in Britain

is 1 to 1,100 of the population is, however, incorrect.) The translation is patently too faithful to the original: greater licence would have made it much more readable.

L. CROME.

NUMBER GAMES

Figures for Fun. Y. Perelman. (Central Books/Foreign Languages Publishing House, 3/-.)

THIS is a collection of "stories and conundrums" translated from the Russian. A knowledge of simple arithmetic and elementary geometry is all that is required to work out the puzzles and problems. Problems of similar type are grouped together. Complete solutions are given, with detailed explanations.

Most of the problems are presented in story form and range over a wide variety of topics. Many are illustrated by drawings. The book is an addition to a series providing light entertainment for anybody interested in playing about with numbers.

D.L.

SOVIET REVIEW OF ENGLISH NOVEL

(A Russian translation of James Aldridge's *I Wish He Would Not Die* appeared in *Innostrannaya Literatura*, 1957, II. The following review, under the title *In the Wilderness of Human Loneliness*, appeared in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 19.12.57.)

THERE are writers whose books show little connection of theme or purpose; others have the same ideas and aims running through all their works. Aldridge is of the latter. His recurrent theme is courage hardened in adversity and struggle; not mere contempt for danger, but the courage without which man becomes a pawn on history's chessboard.

The hero, Captain Scott, is probably Aldridge's most tragic figure; but his tragedy is not that he dies so stupidly by an Egyptian nationalist's bullet, but that he dies just when he is beginning to emerge from his inner chaos. It is the tragedy of loneliness, of a man who thinks everyone has to fight for truth on his own, at his own risk, but whose courageous desire for truth is strong and inflexible. Aldridge has written a novel about the most terrible of all wildernesses, that of human loneliness.

(Abridged.)

L. LAZAREV.

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The Editor's Notebook

ONE of the difficulties of editing a magazine like the *ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL* is dealing with the plethora of material at one's disposal. Literally dozens of articles of interest from the Soviet press pass through one's hands for consideration; but the *ASJ* is not a digest, and most of the material goes to rest on our library shelves. So that it does not all escape notice, however, we will try to use these notes to touch on items of interest.

Musical Education

ONE article that caught our eye was in the March issue of *Sovetskaya Muzyka* on problems of musical education. Thinking of the successes that Soviet musicians have had in various international competitions, one would say that their system of training was not bad. Mr. G. Dombayev makes it clear in this article that there are, however, real problems and deficiencies. The majority of pupils in the numerous Soviet children's music schools, he says, are pianists; and in recent years there has been a falling-off in the number of oboe, bassoon, French horn, 'cello and double-bass students. Furthermore, it has become a tradition to select viola players from among unsuccessful violinists. Then again, nearly half the graduates of the Russian secondary music-schools are choir leaders; and though there is naturally a big demand for them in a country where choral singing is widely developed, as in the USSR, Mr. Dombayev thinks the number is being increased at the expense of other no less important and needed specialities. For example, there is a shortage of qualified music teachers for ordinary schools, and of trained people to direct music schools. Shostakovich dealt with a similar point in an article early this year in *Izvestia*; and it is clear from statistics published last year that teachers of art and music in the general schools have much lower qualifications than teachers of other subjects.

Shostakovich was concerned with musical education in the schools and the fostering of musical appreciation in general, in which he considered the teaching and practice of singing in the schools played a major role. Dombayev is concerned more specifically with the specialised secondary music schools. Further improvement of the level of Soviet higher musical education, he maintains, depends on a marked improvement in the work of these lower schools. His point is that while

there are a great many of them there are not enough good ones, largely owing to a shortage of trained personnel.

Dombayev makes a number of proposals for dealing with the problems he poses, among them a suggestion that every conservatoire should have a music school attached to it and be given supervision over all secondary music schools in its region; that more attention should be given to practical training at the conservatoires; that they should begin work in musical institutions; and that a journal devoted exclusively to musical education should be founded.

Dombayev is also concerned to deal with the situation that gives rise to "swelled heads". He pleads: "It is desirable that every music-school graduate, on applying for entrance to a conservatoire, should present a character from his school. This system has been introduced for applicants to other higher-education establishments coming from production. It is a good system. The enrolment commissions should know not only the applicant's marks for his exams, but also, what is more important, the kind of person he is. This would be of special importance for music colleges. In conditions of individual training some pupils are praised much too highly at their schools (and at home too); they grow up to be infallible 'local talents' and place themselves above the school community. It would do them good to work at their speciality for two or three years, to gain practical experience and evolve positive views on life, work and the collective. Then their studies at the conservatory would be more effective and fruitful."

Amateur Film-making

THE amateur film-making movement has made much progress in the Soviet Union this last year or so, and received particular stimulus from the World Youth Festival in Moscow last summer. Amateur film units have been formed in a number of universities and colleges, factory clubs and pioneer palaces. Their activities have been facilitated by the opening of special studios to process their film. One such group was founded by Marat Larin in 1956 at the Moscow Motor Works and calls itself *ZIL Film*. Its first picture earned it a feature article in *Ogonyok*. After first efforts at a documentary about their institution or works, the clubs have gone on to try more ambitious things. A

national festival of amateur films is being held later this year.

One reason we mention it here is that we have received a letter from an amateur cinema enthusiast in Moscow who wants to correspond (in Russian or English) with fellow amateurs in Britain. Readers who would like his address are asked to enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Othello as a Ballet

AS we mentioned in our last issues, an event of 1957 was the production in Tbilisi of a ballet based on *Othello*. In March, Vakhtang Chabukiani and his company presented it in Moscow during the ten-day festival of Georgian art and music. The illustrated magazines have been full of black-and-white and colour photographs of the production: but it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of the interpretation from them. By all accounts it is impressive. Jadviga Sangovich, of the Bolshoi, who numbers among her cherished memories a visit to *Othello* at Stratford-on-Avon, wrote about the ballet for the trade-union newspaper *Trud*. Of all the productions of *Othello* she has seen, she said, "though each was interesting in its own way, nowhere did this great tragedy make such an impression on me as in Vakhtang Chabukiani's ballet production. Everything is splendid, from the brilliant actor who has created a staggering, really Shakespearian, but absolutely novel *Othello*, and the marvellous music of the composer, A. Machavariadi, to the unusually precise and subtle taste of S. Virsaladze's beautiful décor."

"Perhaps after closer study", she went on, "we shall detect flaws, but now we do not even want to think about it . . . Vakhtang Chabukiani has interpreted Shakespeare choreographically. There is nothing superfluous or alien, no departure from the play. The character portrayals are full and exact, with each word of Shakespeare choreographically expressed. The production's emotional impact is so great that the audience is carried away from the very first note of the overture and is not let down throughout."

The Georgians seem to be making *Othello* their very own. The Tbilisi production of the play has long been famous throughout the Soviet Union.

Film Poll

AN extensive conference of cinema workers was held in Moscow during the winter in connection with the founding and organisation of the Union of Soviet Film Workers. All aspects of the industry were discussed. Reports recorded a considerable reorganisation and extension of studio facilities, an increase in production (in 1957, 144 full-length features were made, against a plan for 115), and a great

increase in cinema performances and attendances.

In connection with the conference, *Sovetskaya Kultura* took a poll of its readers on the films of 1957. Reporting the analysis of the first 5,000 replies, the Minister of Culture, N. A. Mikhailov, told the conference that top votes for the best directing and acting went to Gerasimov's *Quiet Flows the Don*, based on Sholokhov's novel of the same name; the highest vote for the best script went to I. Olshanky's scenario for *The House Where I Live*; M. Kalatozov's *The Cranes Fly Over* was voted the best for camera work; while 2,000 votes went to A. Lepin's score for *Carnival Night* as the best film music.

A number of films collected only enough votes to count on the fingers—e.g. *When the Nightingales are Singing* (two), *Shadow on the Road* (three), *In Pursuit of Glory* (four), *They Met on the Way* (seven).

Sholokhov's Plans

READERS who have attended SCR literary meetings will know that Mikhail Sholokhov has the reputation of being a very slow writer, who does not even hesitate to recall a manuscript from the printers when work is well advanced on setting it, in order to make changes he thinks necessary. At the Supreme Soviet elections in 1954 Sholokhov told his constituents that he would soon finish and publish the second part of *Virgin Soil Upturned*. Some chapters were published in the magazines and whetted the appetite for more, and readers have waited impatiently for the full novel. In compensation they have had the interesting short story *The Fate of a Man*, which is reviewed on another page.

Release of the film version of Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don* has roused new interest in his work and plans. Students at Lvov Polytechnical University, discussing him after seeing the film, decided to write and ask what he was writing and what were his plans. Back came the following reply.

"Dear Comrades,

I suppose you know that I write slowly. Taking into account the fact that in thirteen years I have written three books, I think that is about normal for me.

This year I have finished the second 'latest' instalment of *Virgin Soil Upturned*, and in the autumn I will finish the first volume of *They Fought for Their Country*; plus articles of the post-war years that makes three books.

That two books are being published in the same year is easily explained: I've been working on the two novels simultaneously.

In any case, friends, is quantity honestly so important?

Be happy if this reply satisfies you. From the bottom of my heart I wish you luck in your studies and happiness in your personal life. I don't wish you good health, because you are young, and should be as healthy as young devils without any wishes of mine.

Yours,
M. Sholokhov."

Cultural Relations

DURING March M. S. Groussard, representing *Le Figaro*, interviewed Mr. Khrushchev in what became one of the latter's first published interviews following his appointment as Soviet Prime Minister. In the interview M. Groussard asked if Mr. Khrushchev did not think the Soviet Union and France could have closer cultural and economic contacts. The reply is not without interest to us in Britain.

"Economic relations", Mr. Khrushchev said, "should not be confined to trade alone. In the Soviet Government's message to the President of the French Council of Ministers of May 17, 1957, we proposed joint discussion with France on such matters as opening Chambers of Commerce in Moscow and Paris, periodically organising industrial and agricultural exhibitions in the USSR and France, co-operating in the development of fuel and power resources, co-operating in the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and so on.

"In connection with the latest scientific achievements, notably progress in peaceful uses of atomic energy, broad new prospects of co-operation face our countries. I think it would not be a bad idea for our countries to conclude an appropriate agreement on scientific and technical matters, as this would give both a chance to familiarise themselves with the practical experience our countries have accumulated.

"The prospects for the promotion of cultural contacts are just as broad. In October last there were Franco-Soviet talks in Paris on cultural and scientific contacts. They culminated in the signing of a protocol and a plan for reciprocal exchanges in the fields of education, science and culture for this year, and in the establishment of a mixed Franco-Soviet commission. Under this plan the Bolshoi ballet is to perform this year in Paris, and the ballet of the French National Opera in Moscow. There will be a wider exchange of concerts, exhibitions, films, radio and television programmes, and so on. This, of course, is by no means the end. Both sides must co-operate to widen contacts."

While the flow of exchanges between Britain and the USSR is increasing in many fields, and with great benefit and pleasure to both sides, the way to even greater and wider flow would be facilitated if a broad agreement of the kind the

French and Americans have signed were to be reached.

Aku-Aku

THOR HEYERDAHL'S *Aku-Aku*, which has recently been published here in London, was published in the Russian translation in the January issue of *Yunost*, the literary magazine for young people edited by Valentin Katayev. The translation was prefaced by the following letter from the author, which could well serve in lieu of an editorial.

"It is unlikely that anything has changed the way of life of people throughout the world to such an extent as the revolutionary development of communications. When man moved across the land on foot, or over the seas in dug-outs or on rafts, the world was big. We ourselves have made it smaller, infinitely smaller, by such technical means of movement as the railway and the motor-car, the steamship and the aeroplane. The world has become so small that today we are all neighbours. Friends can visit each other in a matter of a few hours, and enemies, unfortunately, even more quickly, though they may live in their own hemispheres. Today it is impossible to isolate oneself from the surrounding world and its influences. An important invention made in one country quickly becomes the possession of other countries, and the same applies to the most important customs and habits, cultural entertainments, clothes, and articles of consumption. Whoever travels today moves rapidly there and back, and what he sees in his travels greatly resembles what he is accustomed to at home, at any rate to a far greater extent than was the case when our ancestors set out for distant lands.

"*Aku-Aku* is a story about a journey to Easter Island, a very remote inhabited corner in the world. But even to this remote island, which is thousands of miles from the nearest land, in an uninhabited part of the Pacific Ocean, our culture has penetrated. People no longer go about in grass skirts, or live in straw tents; they no longer perform war dances or worship pagan gods. Nevertheless, a great adventure awaited us on Easter Island—not because we had set out to travel thousands of miles to the east or the west, but because we had moved hundreds of years back in time. We had returned to one of the most astonishing cultures of the past in the world, to the culture of the Stone Age, when without machinery or modern tools, technical problems were solved which astound present-day engineers and scientists. Once more we found confirmation of the fact that human genius is not restricted by time or place. Man is man, whether he lives in the east or the west, today or a thousand years ago. We must never forget the need to respect our fel-

low men. One should not be placed above another just because he was born in this country or that, in one historical epoch or another. Let us respect our ancestors and our neighbours, regardless of geography or epoch. Let political ideas compete in the desire to achieve what is better; let cultures replace one another in time, trying to create what is better—because behind all the words and actions of the present moment stands *man*. Anyone who wishes to find confirmation of this would find it useful to make a journey in time and space.”

Tailpiece

TO conclude these notes, I draw on an article by the children's writer Agnes Barto, which appeared in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, and concerned grown-ups, children and editors.

“My young brother Nikita is very fond of puzzles. So he decided to write a letter to the editors: why do they print puzzles for grown-ups but not for children? This is what he wrote to the children's paper: *I should be very grateful if you would publish puzzles. Schoolboy Nikita Smirnov.*

“But Natasha, a fourteen-year-old who lives next door, told him: *That's not the way to write to newspapers. This is what you should write: 'Dear Editors! My school-markings this term have not been too bad, but I promise that they will improve, and in view of this please publish puzzles.'*

“She praised him and added: *The letter is good, but why don't you say something about the work of the Pioneer group?*

“So Nikita added that they had a fine Pioneer group. In the beginning there used to be squabbles, but now they were all united, and so he asked the paper to publish puzzles.

“And Grandma said: *You ought to mention the family!*

“So Nikita wrote that he helped his mother, but promised to do more, and so he asked for puzzles to be published.

“It turned out a fine letter, quite long. And one day Nikita saw it had been published in the paper: they had printed everything about the Pioneer group, and about his mother; but they'd cut out all about the puzzles.”

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